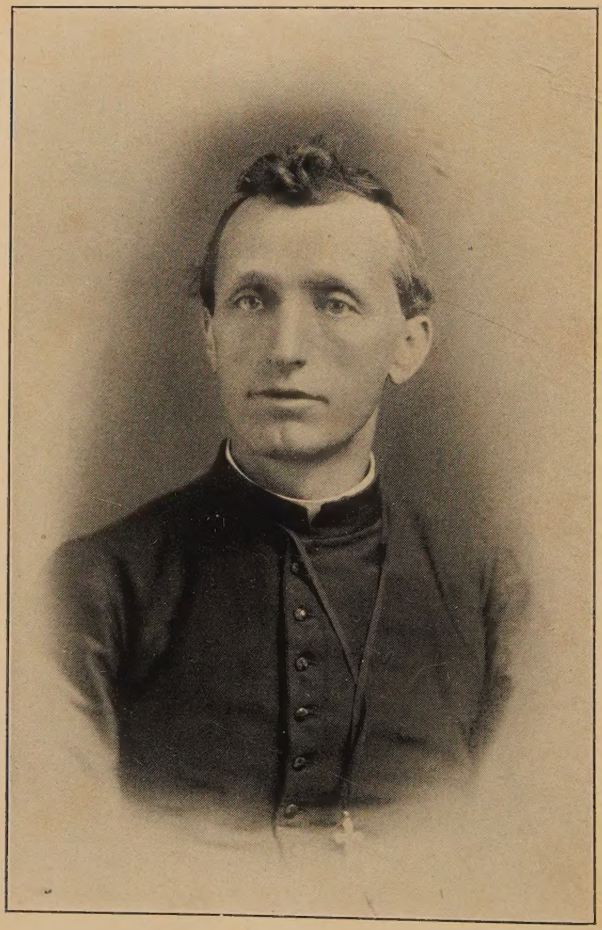

Rev. Louis Vally, 1885.

# For the Honor of the King

The life history of Louis, son of Simon and Marie Vally of Lavaudieu, in the Province of Ardèche, France

WITHDRAWN

By

IRWIN HUNTINGTON-BURTON

*Author of "The Wife of the Son," "The New Psyche," "A Prince of the Wilderness," "The Sacred Fire," etc.*

"Let thy spirit burn with a steady light. Thou canst not know when another shall catch the sacred fire from thee."

PHILADELPHIA
H. L. KILNER & CO.
PUBLISHERS

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By Sisters of Mercy of Vicksburg, Miss.

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*To*
*The Pioneer Priests of the South*
*Strong Men of God*
*and*
*Heroes of the "Forest Primeval"*
*this work is respectfully dedicated*
*by*
*The Author*

# Author's Preface

ONE of the most potent factors in the progress of the human race, has been the tradition, and, later on, the history of nations and of individuals; the virile influence of the lives and deeds of men being the Promethean fire in which Heroism is engendered, and the wings of Aspiration forged.

Since Egypt was young,—the mystic Sphynx unborn—and the scribes of the half civilized potentates of the Nile traced uncouth characters upon leaf and tomb; since Celtic runes were graven upon the rock by the Northern Sea; since the American aborigines first wrought their record and folk-lore in sea-shell hieroglyphics of gaudy wampum, it has been the custom of mankind to preserve the annals of its heroes, that future generations might look thereon and strive.

When the Roman Catholic Church, the Daughter and the Queen of History, inaugurated a

higher civilization, led by the spirit of the Incarnate Word, the Supreme Psychologist, she has, likewise, taught that as thoughts are living things, the sublime suggestions, the fine enthusiasm caught from the records of the great, are of vital import to the soul.

Seeing with the vision of a prophet, she (the Church of Rome), knows the secret places where the world's true heroes dwell; and in her libraries we find, side by side with the history of a Basil, a Jerome, a Cyril, a Thomas Aquinas and an Augustine, the life story of unlettered youths and maidens, and the biography of a *Curé D'Ars.*

If then, dear reader, you sincerely wonder why the history of Louis Vally, the obscure son of peasant parentage, should be given to this twentieth century world, know that our Titan Age is groping toward the light, and humanity is beginning to recognize the truth,—as never before in the history of the race—that the men of power are the obscure workers of the social order, and that the most perfect growth attainable by the soul is possible amid the lowliest and most adverse environment. The spirit of man transcends conditions; the human soul is greater

than its lot. The world grows slowly wiser, and the puppet heroes, who so long have played upon its mimic stage, begin to perish and will shortly be consumed in the ardent fire of the Real.

Soon all men will revere the immortal power of influence, and soon the real heroes of the generation will issue from the wilderness, and men will hail them kings. Regenerated souls themselves, they regenerate the social order; and in comparison with their might, the laws of Lycurgus, the speculation of Plato, the discovery of Columbus, the career of Napoleon and the investigations of Edison, are as an insect's trail upon the ocean beach of racial progress.

Like the lotus, the human soul grows best in the mould of an humble environment; and like the nautilus in its normal development, the soul of man should move onward through ever widening halls to its Ideal.

> "Build thee more stately temples, oh! my soul,
> As the swift seasons roll.
> Leave thy low vaulted past,
> Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
> Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast
> Till thou at length art free;
> Leaving thine outgrown shell
> By life's unresting sea."

Such was the life of Louis Vally,—the life of flower and of nautilus; a life of growth by correspondence with spiritual environment, with Divine inspiration; and such a life belongs to all mankind.

IRWIN HUNTINGTON-BURTON.

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# Introduction

SOMEWHERE in his " De Oratore," if I mistake not, Cicero says that there were as great men among the early Romans as among the Greeks. That everybody knew of the Greek heroes because their deeds had been recorded by enthusiastic authors. But that the Roman people being distinctively a people of ceaseless action had no time to write down for the benefit of posterity the noble deeds and character of their heroes, hence their works died with them.

The same may be truly in a very special manner, said of the Diocesan priesthood of the South, if not everywhere. Being missionaries, they are essentially men of action: men who do much and say little: men who make heroic sacrifices and there is no note taken of them except by the great Recording Angel. In fact there is an element of moral sublimity in the very character of these men, which is elevating if not appalling. Like David, they go out single-handed and alone to

face obscurity and poverty, the world, the flesh, and the devil; while the sun shines upon no land which has not been ennobled by their labors or purpled with their blood.

The life of Father Vally recorded in the following pages is the rule, not the exception. Ab uno, disce omnes.

C. A. Oliver, D. D.

*Jackson, Miss., Sept. 23, 1904.*

# PART I

"All the windows of my soul, I open to the day."

## CHAPTER I

### A SON OF THE SOIL

DEEP in the heart of the "fleur-de-lys," the golden pollen shines; and deep in the spirit of every son of France there lives, likewise, a golden light kindled in the sacred flame of sacrifice. Across the mobile nature of the French, in every age and in every crisis, we find this dominant characteristic of self-sacrifice, manifested in one or another of its Protean forms: from the ascetic renunciation of a Saint Louis, down the long muster-roll of soldiers of the Lilies and the Cross to its manifestations in the deeds of a Joan of Arc or the chivalry of a Lafayette.

Whether we read the history of La Salle, Pere Marquette, Joliet, the brothers Sauvolle, Iberville, Bienville, de Le Moyne;—always amid the shadows of these variant characters, plays the one celestial ray, and from this flame of Gallic sacrifice, have been kindled, with few exceptions, the immortal beacons of Christianity throughout

the two Americas. From court and cottage of vine-loved France, her strong men have gone forth, and above their countless graves, from Canada to the Gulf, wave the unseen, but immortal banners of "Excelsior."

But, if the royal standard of "Renunciation" has been lifted by Gallic hearts that came to birth in martial halls and in the palaces of kings; still more frequently has her ensign been unfurled where grows the lily in its native soil, amid the provinces and by the peasantry of France. Clear hearted as the silver streams, and patient as the Loire that winds its shining threads about its country's heart, and strings her meadows in a rosary of malachite; noble as the mountains whose brows are crowned with deathless snow, and fruitful as her vineyards that lift their purple clusters from Normandy to Lorraine, are the sons of the soil—the natives of Ardèche, from whose sturdy race sprang the boy whose life and labors have written their golden characters upon the history of the Catholic priesthood of this republic.

Like swallow nests amid the mossy eaves,

nestles a little stone and brick cottage upon the gentle slopes of the vine-painted hamlet of Lavaudieu. Vines also bind the quaint gables to the bosom of the hills, in tender surety, that the home and the inhabitants thereof, are one with nature, and must not wander far from the breast of the great earth mother. The curling ribbon of the silver stream ties the vineyard with a love-knot, and from afar, the solemn mountains speak their variant gospels at the rising and the setting of the sun. Nearer by, lies the green plateau of Ardèche; and on a slight elevation above the village, the church spire may be seen lifting the sunset like a streaming banner from its shaft, fit symbol of the simple prayer that prisons all the glories of the universe. The notes of the Angelus fall musically upon the evening as though the sunset radiance had found utterance, and a lad of seven summers gathers the sheep that lie white upon the grass.

Standing a moment in their midst, and calling them by name,—for by name he knows them well—he whistles lightly to his dog, and flinging the little Ardèche bonnet upon his head, trudges slowly down the evening paths and disappears

within the vine-loved cottage on the hill. Less robust than the peasants of his race, and of delicate frame, accentuated by the vivid colors of his rustic garb, is the younger son of the sturdy *econome*, now an independent vine grower of Lavaudieu; for Simon and Marie Vally, also natives of Lavaudieu, are typical scions of their race—the strong-souled, great-hearted bourgeoisie of Ardèche.

A sturdy lad and lass blessed the union of this couple, then came Louis, the shepherd boy of our theme. Long before the rudiments of his education began, or the child took note of such simple literature as found its way to their humble home, the great Book of Nature began to unfold its fathomless mysteries to the younger son of the Vallys, and from its wondrous pages the little Louis drew the depth and tenderness, the rugged strength, the all-embracing love that were the signs manual of his future life.

A delicate frame, unfitted for the rugged toil of the vine grower, prevented the lad from participating in the hereditary labors of his family; while a deep sympathy, and a subtle comprehension of the animal world, caused him to be as-

signed the care of his father's sheep, between which and himself, existed an almost human understanding.

The picturesque Church of St. Andrew nestles in a nook of Lavaudieu, where the sunlight loves to fall; and from dawn until the musical notes of the Angelus have been echoed by the valleys and hushed by the mountains, the ancient spire is silhouetted against the purple horizon—a shining finger pointing to the sky. At its consecrated font the hardy sons of the house of Vally have, for generations, received the Living Waters; and in its humble choir, Simon Vally, father of Louis, leads the choir of males, and his wife, Marie, that of the females. Sweet and clear over the purple vineyards of Lavaudieu, ring the voices of the two Vallys; now, a gay *chanson*, now a *chant d'amour*, but most frequently a tender hymn to the Madonna, whose little shrine gleams like a day-star among the whispering and worshiping leaves of the vines; and upon young Louis, falls the heritage of song. Tenderly over the sleeping sheep float the melodies improvised mainly from his deep love and awakening consciousness of the wonder of life, and the sa-

credness thereof. "And from those far off years among the radiant pastures, through the wilderness, the *Via Crucis* and the Valley of the Shadows," that sweet song of the shepherd echoed on, strengthening, and deepening, and beautifying, the whole of his earthly life.

Gently, from his pastoral hills, up the sacred mount of knowledge, is led our shepherd boy of Lavaudieu; and we find him receiving his elementary lessons from one of those devoted women known as "Sisters of Instruction," who, after the Revolution had decimated so many of the teaching orders of France, gave their lives and energies to the training of Catholic youth. These "Sisters of Religious Instruction" did not live in community, and were bound by no special rule. Singly, they would penetrate the most remote provinces of France; and with the courage of the pioneer, and the love of the apostle, endure every species of hardship, in order to bring the light of education to the isolated children of their native land. Frequently, bred in circles of ultra refinement, these delicate women would endure the fatigue of difficult travel, and insufficient accommodation, with the

zeal of a Hannah Moore, and the devotion of a Florence Nightingale. Such was the source from which the youthful Louis received the rudiments of common education, and the elements of that deeper science whose hieroglyphics are written everywhere on the universe of God. The picturesque ruin of the old abbey of Benedictines was the noble schoolroom in which the little peasant lads were gathered, and amid the weird old corridors, the crumbling arches, the echoing halls where silence brooded on her ivy mantled throne, and shadowy wings beat upon the holy solitude, the young Vally gained his first impressions of the sacredness, the mystery, the awful import of human life. The "Sister of Religious Instruction," was accustomed to wear a light veil as the garb of her office. Often, when the gentle face of the teacher was turned from him, the son of Simon Vally would grasp her drapery and press it reverently to his lips. To the awakening spiritual consciousness of the child, it seemed the visible emblem of the grace and love and inspiration that clothed the venerable woman's life as with a mantle of imperishable beauty. They weave in India, a web of

subtle tissue of such exquisite texture that it remains invisible until exposed to the dew, and it is by the glittering drops alone, that one is made aware of its presence. Thus it is with the highest life; its sacred ministration is so subtle as to remain invisible until the silver dews of rescued souls are caught to gleam upon it. And, in the gentle "Sister of Instruction" who molded the youthful heart of Louis, this truth was beautifully manifest.

Night fell still and starless one unusually gloomy evening, as a bevy of lads of the neighboring hamlet sally forth to the ancient castle, and filled with the spirit of mischief, conceive the design of playing a prank upon the venerable "Sister of Instruction." The lady lives in a time-stained chamber reached by means of one of the gloomiest and most sepulchral of the abbey's corridors. Taking some phosphorus, the boys trace the outline of a human form upon one of the darkest places of the crumbling wall —now lie in wait for their unconscious victim. Slowly, the weary dame paces the hollow-sounding corridors, and suddenly comes face to face with the glowing apparition. A heartrending

shriek! the gentle teacher lies prone upon the pavement. The prank has gone too far; the overwrought nerves have snapped, and, for a time, the lady lies motionless. The terrified lads run for assistance; the dame is carried to her apartment, and recovers from her swoon under the kindly ministrations of the villagers. And, as out of the tiny notes of music are wrought the grand orchestral symphonies, so from this minor episode of suffering in the noble teacher's life of sacrifice, the sensitive soul of Louis Vally wrought the mighty principle of renunciation into the fabric of his life and ministry. But not precociously meditative, and in nowise grave beyond his years, is our little lad of Lavaudieu. On the contrary, a sprightly humor ripples over the graver undercurrent of his gentleness, as the sunlight ripples on the sleeping sea. The clever gift of repartee was his from earliest years, the keen perception of humor in all things; a faculty—which perhaps, more than any other characteristic, sweetened and softened the varied difficulties, the abiding sorrows of his maturer years. And from the day when the tiny lad sallies forth on his first

mission of importance—to haul canes for his father's vineyard, his native wit never forsakes him, and at times, it serves him well. A mirth-provoking picture is the wee son of Simon, wearing the funny little *bonnet* of Ardèche, and driving his plump donkey with as haughty pride as Alexander, when he rode Bucephelus. Behind the donkey is the skeleton-like wagon, with sprawling wheels and a pole in the middle, and upon the end thereof, the triumphant little Vally sits astride, as ecstatic as uncomfortable. Around, are the grave, historic woods; above, the daffodil sky: and in the heart of the lad, is daffodil light, which he coins into merry words. A friendly grown-up neighbor, treading the forest aisles, enquires of Louis, "What are you hauling, *mon garçon?*" The young workman, inflated with the importance of being entrusted with so great an errand anent his father's vineyard, glances mischievously at the sprawling ribs of his wagon, and makes answer straightway, "I'm hauling sand."

But recurring more frequently than any other in the woof and warp of his opening life, is the shining strand of his tender love of animals.

Between this child of Ardèche, reared so close to his native soil, that the rich earth odor permeates his spirit; and the intuitive comprehension, the sympathy, the subtle comradeship with all creation, animate and inanimate, enters into him, and becomes part and parcel of his being. The old Greek myth of Antæus has its foundation in a sublime truth of the universe; whenever the children of men come into contact with the great earth mother, they draw from her bosom, new strength and inspiration.

Besides the sheep upon the morning hills, Louis has his little family of pets, and even the homely fowls of his mother's yard, the downy geese and noisy chanticleers, all know the boy and hail him "*Bon ami.*" And it is in connection with the former much villified bird, that we hear the key-note of the more rugged characteristics of the lad.

One sunny morning, the thrifty Simon and Marie Vally, after the manner of the sturdy folk of Lavaudieu, trudge to a neighboring market town with a goodly company of their snow white geese to sell therein. John, Marguerite, and Louis, are left behind, each to the separate task

appointed by *les bons* parents. Now, the young Louis, intoxicated with the subtle wine of life, and the keen awakening of his own self-consciousness, hastens into the domicile, while his unconscious brother and sister are lingering without, bars doors and windows, and armed with a big horsewhip, keeps the hapless John and Marguerite at bay on the outside of the ramparts, until evening colors paint the watching hills, and Simon and Marie return from their journey, and unceremoniously run the blockade. The young Rienzi goes supperless to bed, a fact which in nowise lessens his sense of mastery, which feeling of elation the cookies of *Grandmère* surreptitiously conveyed into Coventry do much to augment and to justify. And to this same *Grandmère*, dear soul that she was, did the grown-up Louis, in after years, owe many of the sweetest and tenderest memories of his heart.

Such outbursts of self-assertion as the above, are merely the spray, not the silver current of his character; into which, even in early childhood, the music of his voice has stolen. Natural amiability, evenness of temper, uniform gentleness, and abiding tenderness, are blended in the

beautiful smile that is one of the most striking characteristics of his personality. Always fragile, but with clear, firmly-molded features, and the responsive blue eyes of the Ardèche peasant, our lad of Lavaudieu may pass unnoted among the sturdier sons of his native hamlet. Ever retiring, seldom conspicuous in their rude, though kindly games, but a certain thoughtfulness, an indescribable suggestion of concentration to the closely observant eye, marked the little Vally as one elected to enter the inner sanctuaries of life and thought, and upon whom the far-off splendor of Shechinah has already cast its imperishable radiance. About the period of seven years, the strong energies, the mental vitality of the boy, begin to manifest themselves in an eager desire to work—to labor somewhere, somehow; and the incapacity of his constitution will be one of the means used by the Designer of human character to develop the fallow spiritual forces within his earnest nature.

As gently, and as imperceptibly as the diverse influences of earth and air and sea are absorbed into the life of the plant, and transmuted into the bloom and fragrance of the flower in nature's

vast alembic, so are the unlovely incidents, the harsh and ungracious episodes, aye, even the sins and errors of the heart, melted in the chalice of Eternal Wisdom and changed into the holiest lessons and highest aspirations of our lives. And so, when Louis Vally is marched by his mother (by the ear), down the village street to the little church, and thrust into the confessional as penance for some heedless prank there is wrought one of those wondrous changes which even upon so young a lad, leaves its shining mark forevermore. Rebellious, indignant, resentful, and wounded in pride, is the sobbing boy, as the venerable curé draws the little slide, and looks with mild eyes upon the youthful prodigal. The heart of the child is a veritable chaos. Stormy defiance rages within him. Gradually the boy grows calmer. The gray haired curé speaks. Somehow, somewhere, from some far off dawn the Light begins to break; out of immeasurable distance, a sudden quiet comes. The lad is still, his sobs are less frequent—now they cease. The curé murmurs on. The Light grows stronger—suddenly the radiance of some great love word flashes across the tired little heart now listening

with rapt attention. With a cry, the lad leans forward, and the big hot tears fall thick and fast, but chaos is over, Cosmos is at hand. Into the turbulent spirit of the child steals a great, refreshing sorrow—the deep, sweet grief of true repentance. And thus in the soul of the Vallys' son is wrought the wonder of his spiritual Genesis.

## CHAPTER II

### VOX DEI

THE shining sands within the glass fall silently and tell the perfect hour; and gently the golden years of youth fall one by one within the sphered crystal of a noble human life.

The shepherd boy of Lavaudieu, wise with the wisdom of the dawn and of the night, learned in the lessons of grass and wood and stream, in the deep philosophy of inanimate nature, in the glorious "Ethics of the Dust," reaches by gradations as gentle as his native sheep paths, the statue of perfect youth, radiant with hope and promise, sun-bright with love and all compelling faith.

At the age of fourteen years, Louis Vally passes from the care of the noble Sister of Instruction to that of the teacher of the village high school, if the modest curriculum offered by its tutor entitles his establishment to so high-sounding a title.

Little to win the heart, or kindle the inspirations of a lad like Louis, is afforded by the homely schoolhouse and daily *régime* of this commonplace rural academy. And to the shepherd boy, accustomed to the freedom of the hills, to the varied delights of open air life in the beautiful region of Lavaudieu, the confinement of the school grows irksome and the lad chafes under the unfamiliar restrictions.

And yet, the quaint moss-grown schoolhouse is not without its homely beauty. Through the broad, low windows, the trembling vine leaves weave shadow tapestries, changing, kaleidoscopic, like the destinies of the little peasants being fashioned every moment by another Light shining amid the gloom of Evil.

Within, the unmolested spider spins her wondrous web from viewless looms of light and air. Everywhere, the silver wheels are turning. In the green pastures without, the young lambs sleep beside the stream and great-eyed cattle doze in deep content. Anon, the clear tinkle of a sheep bell sounds close beside the schoolhouse door. At the sweet, familiar music, Louis Vally half arises from his bench and his fresh, young

heart thrills with the love of the old pastoral life and the keen desire to return unto it,—the voice of the fields is calling! But the lad must heed it not. The shepherd of Lavaudieu is to watch in other pastures, and to guide his flocks upon the meadow-lands of God.

In the mature life of Louis Vally no allusion is made to the history of the village Pedagogue; but the simple uprightness, the homely maxims, the unswerving rectitude of the schoolmaster have an abiding influence upon the character of his pupil.

Though warm-hearted and naturally responsive, Louis does not make any close friendship while under the instruction of the rural schoolmaster. But in the warp and woof of human life, the prismatic skeins of character are blended by the fingers of environment into strange and wonderful patterns. Not a stream flows, a flower blooms, or a mocking-bird sings where one human eye can see, or one human heart can hear them, but the strength and purity, the fragrance and the song thereof enters the soul and becomes a part of its nature forevermore. And the Master Teacher, who instructs in many ways,

who has given us Revelation and who has given us nature, meant the latter to enter, even as the former, into our plastic spirits, and to impart to them its supreme lesson. With Louis Vally, as with other men whose lives are great and simple, the gospel of the fields, the literature of the forest, remained until the end, the source of noble inspiration. But the second revelation is soon to come.

A Sabbath dawn replete with peace, the peace that loves to dwell in the morning vineyards of Lavaudieu, spreads its dove-like wings above the hamlet. Simon and Marie Vally, accompanied by the elder children, have disappeared down the village path, leaving the young Louis in the cottage home. A painful cut upon the foot keeps the boy a prisoner, and the restless lad is chafing under his enforced inaction, as a venerable stranger approaches the humble door. He is about to knock with his pilgrim's staff, when Louis, who has been idly watching the fleecy clouds drift into the infinite, recognizes the visitor's holy garb and hastens to unlatch the door; kneeling first, as is the custom of the peasant of Ardèche, to receive his priestly benediction. As

the serious eyes of the little lad are lifted to the pilgrim's countenance, a wistful look steals over the kindly features of the latter and the stranger speaks, gently passing his hand the while over the child's uplifted brow.

"Surely, you are Simon Vally's son, my little man. I seem to see your father in you, as I knew him long ago; and it is he I seek for he is my dear kinsman."

"You are a priest—a holy *priest*—and yet our kinsman!" the delighted boy exclaims. "Surely, you will tarry with us for a while. The family have gone to Mass, *mon Père*, but if you will kindly stay with me ——" "Of all things I should like that, little one, but"—a graver look flits swiftly over the countenance of the priest—"why are you not, likewise, at the Sabbath Mass?"

Timidly, the boy puts forth his foot and the good Curé Vally looks sympathetically upon it.

"Perhaps my little one would forget the pain if he could sit a while by yonder stream."

Louis' face grows radiant but quickly clouds again as he casts a rueful glance at the swollen member.

"Nay, *mon Père*, I cannot walk. The cut is bad——"

"*Aha!* that need not hinder," replies the stranger priest; "see, I will have you there in a twinkling."

Before the blushing lad can offer protest, the kindly stranger snatches him from the ground and takes the fishing-tackle from the wall. A few sturdy strides bring the new companions to the border of the village stream.

So still the place, so full of soft, prismatic light, the Sabbath grace seems visible upon it and the voices of unseen birds sing jubilant *Glorias* amid the mysterious leaves.

The willow boughs bend low above the water and the soft monotone of the reeds, the gentle swaying of the lilies, and the cool tinkle of the stream calm the overwrought nerves of the lad. Little by little, the soothing fingers of the water woo the feverish foot; and before the curé can remonstrate, Louis stands triumphantly in the midst of the shallow branch.

"Surely, you are rash, my little one, and your wound will be greatly injured. You must not linger in the water—come."

"A moment, *mon Père.*" The reluctant boy hesitates, bent upon his will. Seeing his irresolution, the curé is silent for an instant. Now, as a sudden inspiration flashes over him, he exclaims in solemn tones:—"Louis, do you know you may become a priest of God some day?" Half dazzled and suddenly startled by so glorious a prediction, the lad sways forward and almost loses his balance. A swift pallor sweeps across his features and is succeeded by a burning flush that makes him tingle with strong excitement.

Another moment. Only the swish of the lilies, the sob of the reeds, the stirring of leaves break the quivering silence. Now ——

"Can that be true, *mon Père;* may Louis Vally be a priest some day?"

"Surely, my son, if he will pray and labor to that end."

A sudden sunbeam, piercing through the trees, kindles a halo upon the brow of the boy; and a light reflected from the "sea of glass" burns in the smile that glorifies his features.

"Then, *mon Père,*" says the enthusiastic lad, his deep emotion finding utterance; "then, *mon*

*Père*, Louis Vally will pray and will also work if you will teach him how."

And from the white lips of the lilies, from the voice of the forest, from the crystal chant of the water seems to come the echo :—

"*Work and pray.*"

It is the psalm of all creation, the golden canticle of the human soul. When the light of the first morning dawned above the virgin pastures, and when the first human spirit sprang rejoicingly from the fiat of the Creator, the mandate, "*Work and pray*," was given alike to nature and to the soul. And ever since, between the two eternities, rolls the watchword through the universe, and by the spirit of Louis Vally is caught and echoed evermore.

"If you will teach me, *mon Père*," the lad repeats, as he reaches the shore and casts himself rapturously at the feet of the curé.

"Aye, I will teach you, boy, and will take you to my home if your good parents will permit."

And so it comes to pass, that out of the unexpected visit of the Curé Vally to the home of his distant kinsman, comes the light that leads the youthful Louis to the Sanctuary of the Lord.

But slight opposition is made by the noble Simon and Marie to the generous proposal of their kinsman; though the sturdy pair have sore misgivings, for young Louis has made no great progress in the village school, and they hesitate as to the wisdom of giving him further education, reasoning in their simple way, that the life of the shepherd seems best to suit the lad. And so it will;—the life of the shepherd within whose fold immortal spirits gather for guidance and for inspiration.

And the oil of predilection from the cruse of the King anoints the youthful soul of Louis Vally, even as the oil of Samuel consecrated that other Shepherd in the fragrant fields of Israel.

Across the threshold of the mystic temple wherein the intellectual life enshrines its apocalyptic splendors,—the fane of classical literature —our neophyte is now about to pass. The son of the Vallys, still frail in body, but strong in grace and noble aspiration, enters the little hamlet and becomes an inmate of his kinsman's heart and home. Not unlike his native village of Lavaudieu is the new habitat in which the

shepherd boy is destined to obtain his first glimpse of the mighty universe of mind, to stand face to face with man's mental power and possibilities. The mossy shrine of the Great Mother gleams here, as elsewhere, in the sunny provinces of France; and the austerer home of the curé is not unlike the cottage at Lavaudieu, save for the atmosphere of learning that penetrates all things as with a subtle aroma. To the mountain-nurtured, forest-tutored lad, here also, as at the high school of Ardèche, the restraint is irksome, the battle with ennui fierce and long. But on the morning hill of Wisdom a far off light is breaking, and the first thrills of the rapture and inspirations of knowledge are born within the sensitive soul of the student.

Again the subtle Spirit of Environment lays her hand upon the boy, slowly, but deftly molding his moral and intellectual nature. The high, pure standards of the curé, the simple, vital work that goes on daily before the eyes of the young Louis, the routine of the little household and,—perhaps as much as any other influence,—the homely discipline of the curé's elderly housekeeper, who has taken the boy under

her motherly protection, but from whose rigid regulations of order and punctuality there can be no dispensation, all become factors in his spiritual and mental evolution at this period.

After the free, truant life of Lavaudieu, the character of Louis requires the kindly, but austere jurisdiction of the household Martha; and in this, the day of her homely rule, the stern necessity and significance of sacrifice, the magnitude of the work to be done for the King, begins to dawn within the soul of the boy and the likeness of the Master to form within his heart.

As yet no note of the sacrificial chant of the missionary life has awakened the echo of his being. The Angel of the Future is silent; but the Angel of the Present, bright Gabriel of human destinies, is designing his eternal plans.

Not without intermission, however, is the life within the curé Vally's home a period of restraint. There are still, sweet hours after the daily tasks are done, when the shepherd boy steals back to the fresh embrace of the woodland solitude—the child of nature, unto nature's heart. It is during these intimate and joyous

communions that the lessons of the curé unfold their real messages to the lad and the soul of Louis Vally gains its higher education from the lips of the forest and the Protean life that teems around him.

In this, the formative, and in many respects the most important period of his life and development, the basal characteristics of the boy are strikingly in evidence, deepening, broadening, refining into the pure traits of a strong and beautiful character.

While in the little presbytery of the Curé Vally, Louis' love for animals seems to strengthen each day, his worship of nature deepens, and a tenderness for the little ones of Christ's kingdom begins to bud and blossom and bring forth immortal fruit within his nature.

Slowly, as a royal flower opens through the tropic night, filling the dark with its soul of fragrance, penetrating and transforming all things, the wonder-flower of the New Testament unfolds its golden heart unto the vision of the little Louis, insinuating its perfume through his awakening faculties, impregnating and glorifying the shadows of his intellect with the aroma of its in-

spirations. Under its sublime and subtle influence, the dormant powers of the boy expand, and into the boundless realm of true philosophy, the neophyte passes with wonder and with awe. Beneath the vital breath of living literature, the being of the lad becomes transfigured, and his more abounding life finds its expression in solemn aspirations, virgin hopes and high enthusiasm. Issuing from his combined emotions, at once their offspring and their crown, is his keener realization of the glory and the power of the priestly state.

Still, the staff of the missionary is unnamed by his desire; at this significant period, his predilection, as far as defined, seems rather to lean to the career of a parish priest. His young affections twine about the hamlets of his native France, even as her fruitful vines embrace her hills. As yet, the great extremes of life are unrevealed to the pupil of the Curé Valley. In this little village more like a great family than a typical town, both Lazarus and Dives are unknown. Great spiritual destitution does not exist; for, like the silver brook that tinkles through the village street, the lives of the godly peasant

folk run placidly on to the ocean of Eternity. The supreme contrasts that exist in the great cities are not found in the hamlet, and the sorrowful-eyed Magdalen appears rarely in the midst. The cruel need, the horrid putrefaction of the crowded haunts of men is a sealed volume to the Vallys' son. Of these people it may be said:—

> "Far from the maddening crowd's ignoble strife
> Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray;
> Along the cool sequester'd vale of life
> They kept the noiseless tenor of their way."

But babes are born among them, and young lovers wed; and babes and lovers, as well as older folk, are placed anon, beneath the daisy 'broidered carpet of the little churchyard. Here, as elsewhere, is enacting the mighty, mournful mystery of life. And our neophyte reads the tender, human lesson, the wonderful lesson that every man must learn in the transit from the cradle to the grave.

All around the little Vally is nature's sublime symbolism. And it chances by that great Kismet whose higher name is God, that the boy draws vital lessons from the quaint and simple teachings of *La Fontaine*, the author most kin-

dred to his thoughts, the author nearest nature's heart. And from the pregnant pages of the Gospels and the homely images of the French Philosopher, Louis Vally derives the inspirations of his career more than from any other literature. By this twofold light thrown upon his kindling intellect, the lad who knows the woodland ways and numbers every wild flower in the neighboring meadows, finds the golden key of the human spirit and the sacred path unto the New Jerusalem.

## CHAPTER III

### THE MOUNT OF WISDOM

HIGH in the universe of God, sun-bright with the reflected light of the Eternal Mind, stands the sacred Mount of Wisdom, and upon its royal foundation beat the bleeding brows of all humanity. The steep path leading to the radiant summit is thronged by an eager press in its lower reaches; but few pilgrims travel the higher level of its solemn ways, and upon its blazing crest stand only the chosen ones whose minds have opened to the touch of inspiration, and have found amid the dross of false philosophies and of human ethics, the cabalistic stone of Love, to indicate the way, in and out of the shadows of error across the chasm of fallacies, the rushing torrents of natural science, the icy ledges of metaphysics, the sealed and chosen few, have reached the white plateau where dwells the Light. Of the elect few who stand upon the summit, most have bleeding hearts and brows;

but anon, a pilgrim—for his true simplicity is lifted by the power of faith and prayer and stands scathless and victorious upon the holy Mount.

When Louis Vally, the shepherd boy of Lavaudieu, leaves the humble shelter of his kinsman's roof to become a student in the college of Briere, the child-hearted lad stands in awe and trepidation, but with strong yearning, at the foot of the wonderful Mountain.

From the deep seclusion, the isolated life and work in the curé's domicile to the keen contests of mind and will in the halls of the preparatory college the transition is abrupt, and the new environment trying to young Louis. Like the delicate bloom of the sensitive plant the youth shrinks as it were, within himself for the nonce. But the excessive timidity is soon conquered and the flower blooms again—the innate sympathy and kindness of the little Vally bring him into gentle and cordial relations with his fellow students, by whom he is at once and continually beloved. Of Louis Vally during the early months of his college life one may write with truth to transpose the poet's line, "Wisdom flies,

but knowledge lingers." The severe application required by the college routine, the stern struggle for classical knowledge, is a still more severe ordeal to the youth, than his work with the Curé Vally. The old pastoral life has indeed unfitted him for the serious application of the schools, and the son of Lavaudieu, like the Curé of Ars, makes no creditable record in the academic halls. But amid the struggle and the superficial failure, always the golden lesson of his life is being learned; always the forming character approaching its high ideal, and surely, too, though slowly, the intellect of the lad expands. From the love of La Fontaine and the devotion of the New Testament in which we have respectively the moral and spiritual philosophy of nature, the transition to the natural sciences is easy; and in the study of physics Louis Vally finds illumination and delight. With the symmetrical growth of the plant his deep love of nature in all her phases begins to put forth leaf and flower. Stronger and more distinctly amid the clamorous tongues of science and philosophy, the one rhythmic call, the sweet still voice of nature, musical with the harmonies of sap and bud and sea,

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sounds ever in his ears, and as in the home of Lavaudieu, and the vicarage of Ardèche, Louis Vally returns at joyous intervals to wood and stream and field, to drink the strong wine of nature. And always, after these solitary excursions, the boy resumes his duties with new zest, renewed in soul and body. Next to his predilection for natural science, and portraying with equal force another salient characteristic of the young Vally, is his deep interest in the higher mathematics and in the seemingly incongruous alliance of the two, we will find the key-note of the power and the practical effectiveness of his future life of ministry. In the glorious labyrinths of the latter mighty science, the eager mind of our student loves to wander; and perhaps no other factor has more influence upon his character than this search for demonstrable truth, for essential order, for the central fact from which he will never turn aside in after years, no matter what allurements offer.

As the variant colors of the prism unite to form the pure white light, so the cardinal virtues of the human heart are blended and transfigured into a Christlike character. The rose hue of

love blooms in its depths; the purple of self-sacrifice sheds its royal lustre, and the gold of prayer—prayer, the soul's communion with the Infinite gleams over all. We pass then, by a natural progression, to that period in the life of Louis Vally in which his spirit begins to find expression in characteristic devotion and it is about this time that we see him evincing profound and tender love for the Rosary of the Queen.

Wherever, within the Catholic Church, the current of a human character has run deepest; wherever the strength that scales the heights of thought and beats at the gates of chrysoprase has been made manifest; wherever the light of Revelation has kindled the human intellect, the nature has been made strong, the mind has drawn its vigor from the power that dwells within the Chaplet. And the fifteen meditations running the gamut of human need, satisfying alike the deepest philosophy and the most untutored love are mighty fountains of inspiration and intellectual achievement.

In all ages it has been in the inner chamber of meditation—in the Holy of Holies of silent thought that priest and poet, scientist and seer

have seen the wondrous vision and have been girded with the armor of the strong. The custom of the Middle Ages by which the aspirant to knighthood was compelled to watch the dark hours through before some lonely shrine is the symbol of the truth that rules the universe of mind, everywhere from the great archangel, from the seraphim rapt in ecstasies of intellectual delight before the throne through the mighty roll of the prophets—to Elijah, Isaiah and St. John, through the strong contemplative Orders, crown jewels on the breast of the Roman Catholic Church—to the humblest being who seeks a quiet place that he may commune with the Divine, the history of all inspiration has been the history of meditation, and only in some lonely Patmos are Revelations found. Thought is power; meditation is systematic thought, and of greater potency than the menti-culture of the psychologist, are the meditations contained in awful simplicity within the decades of the Rosary. Of the supreme science of Christianity the Rosary is the crowning science, epitomizing and transcending the theories of the ancient religions, and cults of modern civilization. To the expand-

ing nature of Louis Vally the meditations of the Rosary begin to unfold their wonderful beauties. Deeper and more intelligent will grow his love of this devotion, becoming in after years one of the most prolific fountains of his happiness and power.

Upon a spur of the royal mountains that like strong sons of God stand sentinel around it, in the province of Puy De Dome is a collossal statue of the Queen of Heaven moulded from the cannon taken by the first Napoleon during his Russian campaign. When seen from afar the gigantic proportions of the statue melt into graceful outlines, pencilled by the gentle atmosphere and painted by the golden light of France. For miles the Enfant-de-Marie can see the object of his devotion. Far and wide the pilgrims come. And over the undulating clover-painted meadows, like summer seas lightly tipped with foam; and upon the purple vineyards and the golden grain, the Mistress of the Harvest sheds her silent benediction.

To the mountain shrine of Puy De Dome the students of the vicinity make many pilgrimages, led thither at times, by the ardor of the lad of

Lavaudieu, who frequently seeks the majestic spot alone. There amid the sacred solitude of the mountain temple the soul of our present boy grows great and strong. A college of the Jesuits near by makes a welcome caravansary for the young devotees, and Louis and his comrades often seek refreshment beneath its kindly roof. Now, the sacred shuttles of the Master Weaver are always fashioning the tapestry of the soul; and the golden threads of power and inspiration are wrought therein during moments when we seem to rest and when the spirit is least conscious of the workings of the Divine. It is therefore while engaged in unimportant occupations, or even trivial pastimes that we frequently learn our noblest lessons and find our most vital experience. Not from the red-letter days are the vivid happenings that show their silhouettes upon the background of human life does character take its dominant color; not by great events are great men moulded but by the unobtrusive though subtle influences that work within the spirit.

High above the passing pilgrims in the attic story of the great college of the Society of Jesus,

dwelt, during the middle half of the nineteenth century an aged member of the Order of Ignatius whom the relentless hand of chronic rheumatism had chained to his chair. Far removed from the sights and sounds of the college, the venerable invalid sat alone, his withered feet ensconced within a box full of straw. But his blind, love-lit eyes, young with faith, merged anon into vision seemed to gaze beyond the noble stretch of woodland to the mysterious horizon; while his ardent spirit passed yet on and on—beyond the sapphire sky, beyond the pure ether, on and upward to the universal home where spirits live in the white immensity of God. Up to the old man's room Louis Vally climbed one day, and in the bare little cell there came unto his spirit a message from the lips and life of the glorious invalid. Straightway, the sympathetic spirit of the lad sprang forth in words of tender condolence—"The time must seem weary, Father; what can you do the whole day long?" "My son," the aged sufferer made answer, "God's universe is very great. I journey through His Kingdoms. I begin first where the cherubim keep the outer portals of the Heavens and pass right on through

the nine angelic choirs unto the utmost world where the burning seraphim adore, and the strong archangels stand before the utmost shrine —they let me pass, I have the watchword—and then I kneel before the central throne, and then —but ah! too soon, the bell for supper rings and with a sigh I must return. The time was all too short for so much ecstasy, but soon the morrow comes and with each morrow I make the journey over! It is a pity, lad, that men must sleep, must squander precious hours in an unconscious state, when such glories circle round."

And to the student Louis upon whose spiritual horizon the first faint light of dawn was breaking came another revelation like a shaft of purest gold to haste the coming of his spirit's perfect day; the message this, "Time is all too brief for the earnest laborer; the moments hasten and thou art standing idle while the wine-press and the vines await thee."

Through the jeweled portal of the Rosary, the lad of Lavaudieu passes with burning heart and wondering spirit into the inner sanctuary of Christian-Catholic inspiration—the earthly Tabernacle of the living Man of Galilee. The meas-

ureless beauty of the Incarnation, and the Divine tragedy of the Redemption are lost in the mystery and wonder of the lowliest chapel, where the Master of Nature dwells in nature's humblest form, and the infinite power, the uncreated intellect, the glories of the great I Am are folded within the prison house of the altar. The supreme tragedy, the unutterable pathos of the lowliness of the Christ of the tabernacle—unheeded by the teeming tides of humanity; neglected by the mighty multitude of his own elect,—appeal so powerfully to the thoughtful sensitive spirit of the youth that he attained therefrom the supreme inspiration of his life, and the spirit and likeness of the Master began to be formed within him. What wonder then, that as the vast celestial harmonies begin to roll their sacred choirs through the soul of Louis Vally that the always beautiful voice of the boy takes on richer sweetness. Ever called upon to sing the Magnificat—within whose golden depths the highest harmony abides and the soul-moving tones of the Miserere in the college chapel, the growing power of his voice found expression and the nameless sacred longings of his spirit were given utterance. The shepherd of

Ardèche has now reached a period which may be called the "Jubilate" of his life.

But amid the glorious symphonies one sweet familiar voice is always heard—the voice of nature—the harmonies of the earth, air and field calling the would-be Levite and never calling him in vain. Throughout his college career—and later in the seminary and mighty school of human experience Louis Vally was noted for his love of athletic sports and every pastime that would lead him out beneath the open sky and into the golden sunshine. Often in the free green pastures his always happy humor, his sparkling wit would excite his comrades to merry laughter. One day after an unusually boisterous outburst—the face of the lad became suddenly clouded, and the merry jest was abruptly checked. Turning to one of his teachers the lad remarked while his frank eyes began to fill with tears, "Father, I fear I can never be a priest, I am not grave enough." "My boy," replied the Sulpician, "laugh all you can, the time will come when nothing will make you laugh." But, it never did. To the little shepherd of Lavaudieu, and wiser in his boyish way than the old Sulpician

and destined by the designs of the Master to reach greater heights of love and sacrifice than the venerable tutor, there never came that time; but through all the heat and the burden of maturer years the genial laughter echoed on, endearing him to the old and careworn, endearing him to those of other folds, above all endearing him to little children.

It is about this period that the appreciation of the supreme power of the priesthood begins to grow within him, to possess and absorb his faculties, to permeate his being. So great becomes his awe at this time, that it would be sufficient to cast the gloom of despondency over a less sunny spirit. But to the lad of our theme, it is but the dawning of a new and wonderful light—a glory that does not extinguish, but intensifies the radiance of his human nature. The restless energy and sprightly wit of the young Louis found pleasing vent in the dramatic entertainments of the college for which he had no mediocre talent. Long afterward, when he had played his noble part in the drama of real life he was wont to tell his flock how in those early days he was always—in the little plays—assigned the

villain's part! It is in his college career that Louis Vally's tender sympathy with every phase of moral or physical need becomes more and more accentuated. Even at this time he is the resource and consolation of delinquent students and is wont by unselfish manœuvres to shield them from the college Nemesis. A manly, straightforward lad, beloved for his manliness and notable because of an indefinable atmosphere of depth and strength that marks his presence as the perfume betrays the hidden flower; though naturally shy and of a retiring disposition, Louis Vally is universally popular with his fellow students and receives from his professors an unusual tribute of respect. One of the faculty, the professor of moral philosophy, a man of strong and well-poised character who intuitively perceived the germs of beauty and of greatness within the spirit of our student, gave him the key of his private apartment and the privilege of studying in the early morning by his fire. Louis Vally was in the habit of assiduously serving the Masses of the priest in question, and it was in recompense for the boy's untiring zeal that this singular privilege seems to have been bestowed.

Of all the college faculty, the professor above mentioned seems to have approached the lad more nearly and to have judged his inner nature and to have recognized his splendid promise more nearly than any other. At this period as in his earlier years, there is little about the personal appearance of the son of Simon Vally that could single him out for special notice. A trifle more indifferent to his clothing than most lads of his age, and caring little for his personal appearance, though scrupulously neat, the young Vally is likewise backward in his collegiate course. No brilliancy marks his career; no classical honors record his passing through the academic halls; but slowly, step by step, each passing year, the shepherd of Lavaudieu climbs the lower reaches of the "Mount of Wisdom" and writes his name upon the roll of honor of the universe.

Louis finishes his classical course at the college of the Sulpicians in about three years—years uneventful to outward seeming—years monotonous in repetition—the red letter days being the visits of the good Marie Vally and the blue ones those filled by a dreary attack of rheumatism which obliged the boy to be taken for six

months to his Ardèche home. There his father's tenderness grew more tender; and the student who had closed his classics opened the great volume of suffering. More than the tutorage of instruction, more than the lessons of the kindly Curé Valley, more than the teachings of the erudite Sulpicians, was the lesson learned in the humble home of Lavaudieu, when the restless, active, yearning boy was sentenced to inaction. The varied energies of mountain and wood and stream were in evidence around him; the mighty forces of the universe were marshaled before his inner vision—the life of the day—the strength of the night. All things intensified the misery of inaction; all nature increased his longing to be about the Master's business. But in the fiery halls of pain, in the solemn temples of solitude and meditation, the soul of the young Levite is brought face to face with self, and face to face with the eternal majesty of Truth.

Louis Vally, 1868.

## CHAPTER IV

### QUID RETRIBUAM

UPON a beautiful branch of the river Saone in the province of Haut Loire, not far from the picturesque Cevennes Mountains, the historic Seminary of Le Puy uplifts its majestic walls, forming the central figure of a landscape singularly lovely even amid the loveliness of Southern France. Famed in legend and in history is the venerable town of Puy-en-Velay; its glorious pedigree running back to the First Crusade, when Aldemar de Monteil, the scion of an illustrious family of France represented the Pontiff, Urban II in the army of the Cross. The noble Seminary established by M. Olier has proved through several centuries the prolific fountain from which have flowed the living waters of spiritual inspiration. Le Puy was taken possession of by the order of St. Sulpice and because of the effective work done by the society

and the unusual character of its rules, the Sulpicians merit more than a passing mention.

M. Olier, the founder of this remarkable Congregation, was born in Paris, Sept. 20, 1608. It is said that though destined by his parents for an ecclesiastical career, his natural liveliness of disposition and his fiery temper made them doubtful of his fitness for the ministry ; but the great St. Francis de Sales himself assured them of the boy's remarkable future. The young Olier became a priest about the year 1633, and afterward several times refused the episcopal dignity. In 1642 this remarkable man laid the foundations of a community for the direction of a seminary at Vaugiraud, whence he subsequently moved with his companions to Paris, and became parish priest of the Church of St. Sulpice. From St. Sulpice therefore, the celebrated order derived its name "Sulpician." When the storm of the revolution burst over France, the wise Superior in charge at that period sent a small delegation of Sulpicians to the United States, and one of their traveling companions was the famous Viscount de Chateaubriand. After a voyage of three months they reached Baltimore

and founded the notable St. Mary's Seminary, which stands to-day, a magnificent monument to the Order.

The members of the Sulpicians are bound by no vows; it is a community of specialists and the sagacity of its Founder anticipating the most advanced educational theories of the twentieth century, devoted all the spiritual and mental energies of its members to the training of the young Levites for the service of the Altar. Although unlike specifically, we are here reminded of the noble order of the Jesuits whose deep learning and profound intellectuality are focused upon the illumination and guidance of the soul.

From the celebrated Seminaries of St. Sulpice, have come nearly all of the most effective and best equipped workers in the priesthood. When we find then, the peasant boy of Lavaudieu entering the academic hall of Le Puy, Haut Loire and placing himself under the guidance of its gifted faculty, a rich and fruitful period of his life is inaugurated and one of the crises which determine his future destiny approaches.

In the home of the Curé Vally and at the pre-

paratory college, the young student was, in greater or less degree, under the kindly care of his dear ones and the influence of his home. In these days of rapid transit and this country of magnificent distances, the tiny journey from Lavaudieu to Le Puy would be considered unworthy of the name of "journey" at all; but more than fifty years ago in the primitive parish of Ardèche and Haut Loire the one who made the trip was looked upon as a traveler indeed; and it was with a profound sense of his separation from his family and youthful environment that Louis Vally bade adieu to his people and turned his steps unto Le Puy. To the boy it was the Rubicon that divides the years of youth from the years of manhood.

In the stately Seminary all the discipline to which the youth has been accustomed and which has kept him still a child is completely reversed. Here no surveillance, no humiliating restrictions are imposed upon the young Levites, but the strong sense of the solemnity of their vocation, the promptings of honor, the obligations of duty, alone guide them in the right direction, and broaden and deepen their characters for the

self-dependence of the years of future ministry.

Under such conditions the growing intellectuality of the youth, the intellectuality that awoke at the call of La Fontaine and the powerful "Open Sesame" of the New Testament and that expanded in the magic atmosphere of logic and of natural science, now begins to burgeon in the rich soil of philosophy and the royal inspirations of the Psalms, which in after years he was wont to call "the bread of life."

At this period too, by rhythmic transition and in the mysterious order of spiritual inspiration, the heavy burden of the sorrows of humanity begins to press upon his youthful spirit and a great devotion to the Passion of the Master to absorb and possess his faculties. Now his harmonious voice intones the sweet, sad wailings of the "Stabat Mater." Upon the maturing spirit of the youth of Lavaudieu, the deep woes of the children of Adam press with a weight that amounts almost to suffocation. The great sob of the human rings mournfully through his soul; but all the sadness and yearning sympathy of the boy is gathered by his worshiping voice and ut-

tered in the sublime sorrow of the hymn to the desolate Mother.

As gradually as some delicate fabric absorbs the perfume of the musk until its entire substance is permeated with rich odor, so the impressionable nature of the son of Simon and Marie Vally receives from the noble environment of Le Puy and the still more subtle atmosphere of grace, an ever deepening sense of the mission of Holy Orders. As one by one, when night is fair, the planets show their royal beauty, so, one by one, to the clearing inner vision of the boy, the glories of the Seven Mighty Sacraments are revealed. The Sacraments! strong thuribles of grace into whose divine fires the priest must dip his anointed hand and touch with flame the Christian soul, even as the seraph touched Isaiah's lips and the spirit shall behold the wonders of infinite power and beauty.

But no sign of the interior shadow is manifested at this time in the demeanor of the youth. In his words and actions the sunlight always plays. At the seminary as in the preparatory college of La Chartreuse, Louis Vally is endeared to all by his ardent, cheerful nature,—a nature

gradually expanding like that of the youth of Nazareth, with broadening sympathy for all mankind,—but to three of his fellow students an especial affection is given and thereby the foundations laid of the deepest and most enduring friendship of his life.

The students in question were Florimond Blanc, M. Chevalier, and M. de Mourenger, afterward pastors respectively of the Wolf River district, of Biloxi, and of Bay St. Louis in the State of Mississippi. From the deep devotion, the superb faith of de Mourenger, Louis Vally drew much strength and inspiration. So profound was the impression that the spirituality of the youth in question made upon the lad of Lavaudieu, that the latter frequently related during his years of ministry, how, one day, when the seminarians were preparing to enter the confessional he, Louis, said to de Mourenger: —

"Give me the weeds you throw out of your garden." This heroic boy bred in the luxurious atmosphere of a French Chateau, left the brilliant coteries of his native land to become an exile amid the unknown wilderness of America. Dreary and filled with the insidious germs of

malaria were the vast swamps that spread their gray-green pall about the region of Wolf River. From horizon to horizon the dull melancholy landscape rolled its vast desolation, while eerie mists hovered above the sluggish watercourses and writhed like tortured spirits in mute agony. Only the ceaseless monotone of the reeds; only the lonely call of the marsh fowl; the missionary stood face to face with Solitude. Rank morasses, dangerous bogs, where marsh gases flickered like spirits of evil and Jack-o'-lanterns kept their horrid Walpurgis, intersected the entire region over which the gallant courier of the King plodded his dreary way to the inmates of the little log cabins, scattered here and there at great distances through the melancholy waste.

Into the pages of history have passed the deeds of Pere Marquette, and of Pere Joliet, of Damian and the Prince Gallitzin; but in the swamps and forests of Louisiana have been lived as great if unrecorded lives—lives that are written within the holy sagas of the universe.

Second in the trio of students whose personalities had an abiding influence upon the life of Louis Vally was M. Chevalier. Of good though

not of noble birth, this youth also dared the dangers and privations of the early days of Mississippi, and planted beside the Mexican Sea, the mighty standard of the Cross. Often to his little vicarage where the musical monotone of Biloxi Bay could be heard from the wide veranda and the mighty pulses of the sea gave their rhythm to the human soul, the poet-priest, Abram Ryan, would come and weave perchance, some of the sweetest harmonies that live within his Southern songs. Two of these dauntless pioneers, the early friends of Louis Vally have passed from marsh and forest into the banquet chamber of the King; the third, Rev. Florimond Blanc of Bay St. Louis, still serves his Master by the Southern Sea. Father Blanc's life and ministry are too well known to require mention; he lives and labors amid the love of his people, and merges their mutual tenderness into the all-encompassing love of the Leader in whose steps it is his highest joy to tread.[1]

And besides the three remarkable students whose strong personalities left an abiding impress

[1] Rev. Florimond Blanc died June 13, 1903, after a brief illness.

upon the character of our young seminarian, there came into the life of Louis Vally at that period another virile influence—namely the noble spirit and teaching of a venerable member of the faculty. To a brilliant intellect that dwelt as in its native home amid the dazzling labyrinths of the higher metaphysics, the child-hearted professor united the humility of a Francis de Sales and the simplicity of an Aloysius. Like all who enter into that inner sanctuary of thought where intellectual truth and true mental illumination are found, the aged philosopher was made humble because he stood perpetually in the sublime presence of Wisdom. Like the convex mirrors of deft workmanship they make in Venice, is the crystal of the intellectual life; all who look therein behold their own image diminished a hundred fold. And so it is that the great of all ages—the seer and the prophet, the artist and the poet, are men who have become in heart even as the little ones of the Lord. On the Tabors of human thought the attitude is prostration. "Unless ye become as little children, ye shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

Tradition says that the venerable Doctor of whom we have spoken, though well illumined from within, had defective human sight, and a memory that often played him false. Contrary to the usual custom in Le Puy, the professor was in the habit of using his notes for the exhortation it was his wont to give to the faculty and students while at their evening meal. With thoughtless ingenuity some mischievous seminarians of which young Louis was doubtless one, placed the light upon the rostrum in such a position as to throw the notes of the unsuspecting Doctor completely in the shadow. When the crucial moment came, the grace being said, the old professor was seen to hesitate to begin the usual address. Sharp and clear sounded the bell of the Superior, an imperative signal that the Doctor should commence. Still the old man hesitated; then—his venerable head falling slightly upon his breast, amid the amazement of the faculty and the ill-concealed mirth of the students, he silently descended the rostrum and pacing the long length of the aisle between the tables from which all eyes were riveted upon him, with the humility of a John Berchmans, the

old man spoke: "Rev. Father Superior, I cannot see my notes."

"Father," replies the edified Superior, in a voice that trembled with emotion, "what you would have told us you have preached by your example!" Long after the saintly philosopher had passed into the higher seminary of the Supreme Metaphysician, Louis Vally was wont to relate the above incident which powerfully augmented the childlike sympathy, for which he was so remarkable in his later years.

From the classic atmosphere of the academic halls, the young Vally would return when summer brought the long vacation, to the homely shelter of his parents' roof, and the emerald vineyards of Lavaudieu. His heart, fired with the mighty hopes that burned within him, his intellect thrilled with the inspirations of metaphysics, the young seminarian loses none of his love of the old environment, but the earth mother received him back into her arms, and he returns her caresses with a maturer and more responsive delight. No longer clad in his peasant garb but wearing the simple habit of the seminarian. Simon and Marie are filled with

honest pride as they behold their boy now, indeed robed in some of the vesture of the glorious priesthood; and the heart of the young Louis is exalted and thrilled because of their tender and self-sacrificing devotion. So absorbed is the mind and soul of Simon Vally in the noble destiny of his youngest child, that with a spirit of abnegation worthy of an Ignatius he leaves his little vineyard, the vineyard that has curled its tendrils around his heart, bids adieu to his beloved wife and his fireside and accepts the position of econome for a wealthy landowner in order once more, that his boy may become a worthy econome in the vineyard of the King. The care of his own little domain is left to his elder son, and Louis, now grown stronger in constitution, treads the wine-press in company with his brother during the vacations, even as in after years he will tread the wine-press of Apostolic labor side by side with the Elder Brother of all mankind.

Besides the beloved out-of-door tasks, when the rich grape odor steals about his heart and the song of the bird into his spirit, Louis loves to aid in the homely duties of the household and

to minister to each of its inmates, but especially to the old Grandmère, who was rapidly descending the sunlit evening slopes of a beautiful and noble life.

Silently as drift the snowy clouds and melt into the infinite, so the white days of the vacation pass; days when the golden summer kindles a nimbus above the fields, and when approaching autumn, breathing on the harvest, makes the answering vineyards set a thousand amethysts on the malachite of the fretted leaves.

Before returning to the seminary however, Louis would spend fruitful hours with the venerable village curé; hours of soul communion—more—hours replete with virile suggestion, and with spiritual illumination.

Soon the fragrant summer passed, the Vallys' son finds himself once more within the halls of Le Puy. It is the third term of his residence within the University. Deeper and deeper the student drinks of the well of theology, and more and more he becomes imbued with the vastness of that science.

Thus far the current of the scholastic year runs peacefully, flashing its silver waters in the

serene light of Truth. As yet no ripple of human unrest, no struggle of the spirit clouds its surface, but not thus undisturbed is it destined to reach the ocean of the Past. Even now a crisis is at hand. Across the moral consciousness of the youth no premonition of the impending change has cast a shadow. Within his spirit all is still; and thus it will ever be. The great soul events are noiseless; and Revelation shrouds her face like a seraph in her wings. All supreme lights are still; all vital moments, calm. God works noiselessly in His universe, noiselessly in Nature and the human soul. Birth and death have silent footsteps. Inspiration is velvet shod. It is with spiritual, as with physical light; one law is made manifest in both; both are silent; both flash a mute and sudden splendor.

There came one evening to the college halls, one whose name is known in many lands, and whose name is loved wherever known. Right Rev. William Henry Elder, Archbishop of Cincinnati, then Bishop of Natchez, Mississippi; and in his presence the faculty and students at once recognized the true and tried Ambassador of the King. Across a mighty waste of waters, from a

land desolate with the new desolation of Civil War; from a land weeping over the Conquered Banner, and the countless graves of her heroic sons, has journeyed the noble prelate on the nobler mission of obtaining recruits for his little band of clergy decimated, impoverished, by the awful hand of battle. Unutterable anguish had rebaptized his spirit, and any heart less dauntless than that of the indomitable Bishop, would have faltered before the difficult quest and the supreme sacrifice that must be exacted from the heroic men, who would follow him to the land of exile and of tears. Even the fearless spirit of the Mississippi prelate seemed about to fail him when in the great capital enroute for Le Puy; but his flagging energies were renewed by the suggestion of a noble woman of Paris. "Monseigneur," said the pious dame, handing him a tiny image, "take the statue of St. Joseph; ask him to aid you in obtaining priests for your foreign mission; he has never failed me, he will not fail you."

Touched beyond measure by the sublime faith of the donor, the tears sprang to the eyes of the Bishop. Gratefully receiving the statue he re-

plied: "I will, indeed, do as you advise, my daughter." And the Great Prime Minister of the King and Chief Steward of the royal revenues, turned a willing ear to the petition of his Sovereign's ambassador, and gave him from the noble France that had already sent forth Marquette, Druillettes, Jogues, Joliet and many others, four dauntless recruits whose life and labors have written some of the sublimest passages in the records of missionary work in America.

And on that memorable evening at Le Puy, while the sweet odors of the night flowers were borne upon the air and the very atmosphere seemed permeated with a deep peace, the Pentecostal spirit was moving apace and soon His lightning-like presence was to kindle an undying fire in the souls of three students of His predilection. It is in the refectory of the Seminary, and the hour of the evening meal. With grave and gentle voice the foreign Bishop speaks to the assembled youths. But a few subdued words have passed his lips, yet the earnest attention of the students is accorded him. Not a student stirs; not a sound is made within the great

refectory. So deep the silence that the clear, plaintive call of the night-bird falls upon the ear with startling distinctness. With rapt faculties professors and students follow the wonderful story—the terrible drama of real life that has been enacted beyond the Atlantic. The prelate tells of his land where every household has its new made grave, where God's white altar stands desolate; where the Mass bell is hushed; where the dying pass unshriven; where the footfalls of desolation are heard upon the wilderness and the spirit of the South lays her beautiful, hopeless brow upon the soil and weeps her tears of blood. Now comes the call for aid. The strong moonlight begins to creep within the casement and the forehead of the pleading Bishop seems anointed from on high. The young Vally, whose duty it is to serve at table this evening according to the custom of the Seminary, stands riveted upon the spot where the broad beam shines brightest. The low, earnest voice of Monseigneur Elder, flows on, infusing his deep enthusiasm, his profound sympathy, his measureless love of suffering humanity into the hearts of every one present. The touching appeal con-

tinues—reaches its climax in the question: "My sons, who among you will follow me?"

Burning with high enthusiasm and strong resolve; called by the same voice that spoke to the Twelve, to Saul of Tarsus and to Father Damian, three youths step forward and in doing so make the supreme oblation of their lives. The Pentecostal fire burns within them and a sudden power forms their youthful frames glorifying them for the nonce, into the statue of the perfect Man—into the image and likeness of the Eternal Prototype. "We will follow you, my Lord, wherever you may lead us."

Still the youthful server of the evening looks on in silence, but a swift flush stains his cheek as his spirit pays tribute to the superb sacrifice made by his three companions. As yet no kindred inspiration comes to him; no voice from the alien wilderness calls his name. The time is not yet ripe but the holy hour is near at hand.

It is now the third day after the momentous evening and the American Bishop is about to depart from the Seminary with his three recruits. In the still brilliant noon Louis Vally walks slowly down a silent corridor of the college a

pocket Testament open at the Psalms within his hand. But not upon the sublime invocations does the mind of our Levite dwell. The spirit of the boy is bathed in the radiance of the sunlight and with the joyous nonchalance of youth he is humming sotto voce, an old chanson of the provinces—a ballade of home and vineyard, of flocks and fields. But the supreme moment has arrived. Glancing casually downward with intent to close the book, the mighty words, all power and flame of the ninety-sixth Psalm rise like the fiery sword of the cherubim upon his sight, barring him from the eden of the old peaceful life, thrusting him into the outer wilderness.

"Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name, bring an offering and come into His courts."

Instantaneously and as a lightning flash from the heavens, their awful import, their supreme obligation is revealed to him. Through the calm of the noon a voice is speaking and the soul of the student questions: "Quid retribuam? quid retribuam?" And the mystic Voice makes answer:—"Go thou, likewise into the wilderness."

As though an electric current thrilled through his being, the whole nature of the youth grows luminous with high resolve.

Scarcely a moment has passed since the last note of the chanson fell upon the silence, but that moment has transformed the youth into the man, the student into the apostle. And led by the strong compulsion of the spirit, Louis Vally, with the promptness that characterized every vital action of his life goes directly to the reverend prelate and in a voice husky with emotion, but tense with an unalterable purpose, exclaims:—

"I offer myself for the foreign missions, my lord; I will follow you through life unto death!"

Filled with amazement and admiration, the great tears spring to the eyes of the American Bishop, and with the impulse of the father, and the instinct of the shepherd, Bishop Elder throws his arms about the youth and gathers him into his close embrace.

And to the spirit of each speaks the Supreme Spirit: "Ask of Me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."

## CHAPTER V

### THE LEVITE

As in the musical sonata the notes of depression accentuate, interpolate and prepare the way for the high notes of elation and jubilee; as the solemn bass of the organ rolls its rhythmic moan between the treble chords of clarion-like exultation; so, in that wondrous instrument, the human spirit, the high emotions that swell the grand crescendo of self-sacrifice, fade and are lost, for the nonce, in the plaintive diminuendo of human foreboding, uncertainty and nameless fear. It is our heritage from Adam, the birthmark of the sons of men, the brand burned by primal evil upon the race. Somewhere in the dust, the strongest spirit hides its feet of clay; but the vital breath of God plays ceaselessly upon them, and immortal wings are bred within the stone.

When the presence of the great American Bishop was withdrawn, and his fine enthusiasm

no longer a sacred fire from which to draw the living flame of the mighty spirit of renunciation, the high exultation, the eager desire of the youth of Lavaudieu for the unknown labors of the missionary life begins to ebb slowly, almost imperceptibly, leaving the young heart of him torn and sorrowful with the sorrow known only to those fine natures capable of supreme generosity and of measureless suffering. Great emotions, like the ocean, leave their flotsam and jetsam on the spirit. In this, the dreary day of mental reaction, a vague regret for his hasty offer to the foreign prelate, a supreme yearning for kindred and for home, an intangible dread of the mysterious future, of the vast, unknown shores upon which he must walk alone, the strong yearning of youth for life and light and the joy of living, —the familiar places, the accustomed paths—depresses his spirit and sensibly affects the buoyancy of his nature. A mighty dread of, he knows not what, rises like a titanic spectre and wreathes its bony arms about him, pressing him in its horrid embrace until the heart of him stands still and the clammy perspiration comes in beads upon his brow. It is the soul's recoil, the

dull and drear reaction after the fervor of the sacrifice when all that renunciation involves settles its leaden weight upon the heart, that tests the fibre of the hero's spirit in church or cabinet, in the camps or on the Rialtos of the world. And from Abraham to Father Damian, from the Mother of the Maccabees to Catherine Mac-Auley, it is the daily, living sacrifice, not the first oblation, that proves the saint and wins the victory.

Slowly passed the days with the son of the Vallys—an eternity of feverish expectation of the letter from the prelate to whom he had offered allegiance (for the discreet Bishop had deferred his answer to our student), the message that would decide his career and accept or reject him for the far off mission. Small wonder that the youth grows pale from the inward conflict and that upon his physical frame are impressed the ravages of the mental struggle. An indefinable, but evident change steals over him as a light mist veils a landscape, refining and glorifying its familiar features. A gentle dignity informs his nature, a deeper tenderness and a more marked reserve; as though the tortured spirit, in its stern travail, withdrew into its inner sanctu-

aries. Students and professors, alike, become conscious of this. With something akin to reverence they look upon the youth; with an almost feminine gentleness they give him the accustomed greetings. It is the universal response of truth to truth, of nobility to nobility. Deep in the farthest chamber of the human spirit, the fine, electric spark of potential Truth lies sleeping; anon, in supreme issues, it flashes forth to meet and mingle with the kindred spark in the heart of another. The great soul of humanity, like a vast, æolian harp, must ever respond to the breath of the Word.

To Louis Vally, keenly conscious of the altered demeanor of his companions, comes another crisis which, like a second baptism, regenerates and stimulates his drooping spirit.

One golden day while the woods are full of song and the sweet bird psaltery steals through the open windows of the college chapel, the son of Simon and Marie utters the tremendous vow to which all nature seems to listen—all the universe, to comprehend. Across the vast creation, emblazoned in living flame, glow the grace-white lilies of immortal Chastity,—Jehovah's holy

"hall mark" on His work. By their pure refulgence Genius lights her way to the fountain of uncreated wisdom; in their life-giving radiance, Thought and Inspiration come to birth; in their Promethean fire Love forges her celestial wings.

And beside the shining seal of Chastity, the first of the Major orders burns its sublime stigma upon the soul of the boy of Lavaudieu.

Still, the woodland voices chant their sweet accompaniment and the words of the officiating priest sound clearly upon the silence of the chapel:—"*Dear children, as you are about to be promoted to the Holy Order of Subdeaconship, you should attentively consider, again and again, what a burden you this day freely seek. For as yet you are free . . . if, however, you receive this Order, you will be no longer at liberty to retrace your steps, but you will be obliged to serve God perpetually (to serve whom is to reign) . . . and to be forever bound to the service of the Church. Wherefore, while there is yet time, reflect,—now, if you wish to persevere in your holy resolution, in the name of God, come forward.*"

One solemn step toward the altar—a step from the lesser into the more abounding life—from the court of the gentiles to the court of the Levite. The mystic prostration follows, while the mighty words of the "Litany of All Saints" link with resistless invocations the spirit life of the universe, —world with world, soul with soul, earthly with celestial. It is the golden chain that binds the whole creation; that links the seraph to the Christian babe, the strong archangels to the sons of men, the spirits wandering in the dim realms of probation, to the flashing Raphaels of uncreated joy.

As the glorious aspirations fill the air, a thousand viewless wings seem—to the rapt soul of our Levite—to beat upon the morning, as though serried ranks of saints and seraphim were gathering from unimagined distances. And a thousand, thousand voices seem to mingle with the chant of the birds and the last note of the *Agnus Dei.*

A light touch upon the shoulder from the Master of Ceremonies, recalls the young Subdeacon to his surroundings; and, with a motion of bewilderment, as of one aroused suddenly from

dreams, Louis Vally moves slowly to his place among his companions.

An hour later, while the morning dews are still upon the grass, and the sacred dews of Holy Orders fresh upon his spirit,—for nature is smiling with eternal youth and the soul of the lad sings within him—the new made Levite is handed the letter from the American prelate. It is the long looked for message; will it hold the summons?

A swift pang stabs the heart of the shepherd of Ardèche. For a moment that seems an eternity, the old reluctance, the yearning for home and kindred, the shrinking from the unknown, surges over him and his trembling hands refuse to open the envelope. Rallying by a supreme effort, Louis hastily scans the contents of the letter. *It is the fiat.* But as though strong wine were poured upon his heart, seraphic fire lit within his spirit, the wavering, the doubt, the human yearning fall from him, as worn and discarded garments; and glorious in the glorious hour, stands the Levite in the freedom of his blessed emancipation! A second Pentecostal flame has touched his soul; shadowy fears be-

come luminous hopes; doubt is transformed to faith, vacillation, to action.

When Louis Vally meets his companions at the recreation hour, not one is insensible of the last and greatest change within the youth. The fragile, gentle student seems suddenly to have grown to manhood and a subtle power emanates from his presence. Great ideas make us greater; they are spiritual new births; and under the all compelling influence of his high resolve, the whole nature of the youth is gradually but perceptibly transformed.

Scarcely has the summons from the Mississippi Bishop wrought the swift purification of the heart and will of our Levite when—going composedly to his desk—he indites a brief letter to Simon and Marie. Of the message in question we will speak more fully later on. No word of pleading must find place therein, for the well meaning, but mistaken parents could not yet accept his hasty decision—a decision that will rend their very heart-strings. He must act,—act alone, act instantly. And so the message goes.

But from the hour in which the momentous letter is mailed, the sunny smile of the boy be-

comes graver, and his voice that night in the college chant interprets more tenderly than before, the measureless sorrow of the *Miserere*.

Not unlike a sweet though mournful dream, are the last few days at the Seminary; a dream of love and tears, of parting and eager anticipation, of friendship,—the strong bondage thereof he will always own, of lessons graven deeply upon his soul, of classic scenes silhouetted forever upon his memory. Through the stately halls of Le Puy a genuine sorrow is felt by students and professors because of the approaching departure of the young missionary,—inconspicuous, unostentatious, but gentle ever,—a life always radiating, always drawing love.

Soon came the fair, swift journey to Paris through the beautiful, blooming provinces. Then, the reunion with his comrades, M. Blanc, Chevalier and de Mourenger, the grave and kindly prelate, and the awful presence of the great city.

For the first time the child of nature dwells within the fetid heart of a mighty metropolis. All the putrid life beats its unclean waves upon his soul, so deeply does the nature of the future

missionary sympathize with the terrible need, the hideous spiritual desolation around him;—the mighty life of the countless multitude; the eternal tramp of its bleeding feet; the wretched voice of its feverish activity, the fiendish misery of the streets, the gilded pollution of its noblest boulevards, the terrible dirge of humanity—dirge of hope and peace—that rolls its monotone through the traffic and toil, the gaiety and license, the doom and death and nameless misery of the people.

One by one, as the earnest seeker lives his life, are rent the veils that hide the sacred fountains of wisdom and of strength. Step by step, the hand of unsought but preordained experience, leads the spirit unto the Holy of Holies where peace and purpose, calm and power anoint it to fruitful activity. The fragrant breath of the virgin spring imparts a lesson to the soul; the fields of unpolluted snow lay bare sweet gospels; and in the great centres of so called civilization, the leprous fingers of human society draw back the veils from God's mighty revelations for whoso can read the hieroglyphs within.

Thrown for the first time into the midst of surging multitudes, far from the sheltering walls

of the Seminary, the very earth seems to fall away from the feet of our Levite and his spirit to wander amid chaos. But when Louis Vally leaves the glittering capital, a new and permanent strength has entered into his nature.

With the white heat of enthusiasm kindling his faculties, focusing his thoughts like a great search-light upon the one glowing goal,—help for some individuals of the social order; cherishing with hourly increasing zeal the customs and traditions of the Seminary, the announcement that the beloved cassock must be abandoned for citizen's dress, came as an unexpected and ungracious trial. Though advancing steadily in the wisdom of the Master, our Levite still clings to symbols with the impetuosity of youth, nor yet fully realizes that abstract truth and right and worth will preach their high evangels in whatever garb expediency may clothe them. At this initial stage, as throughout the whole momentous journey which formed so crucial a period in the life of the shepherd of Lavaudieu, the fatherly council and pure philosophy of the Bishop of Mississippi, were an unfailing guide and consolation.

To all refined and sensitive spirits, to all minds that have separated the real from the shadow, the gold of life from the dross thereof, trials of a momentary nature, difficulties of financial character, bring keen and peculiar suffering; and to Louis the problem of securing the necessary means for his passage to America, falls like a sudden frost upon his burning hopes. To ask aid of his parents is impossible. In the storm of sorrow and resentment with which he had reason to believe his sudden resolution would be greeted at home, no possible hearing would be given to his plea for assistance. But in the emergency, the abiding faith in the aid of Providence, the royal power and "right of way" of the brave and the true that was ever afterward a fundamental characteristic of his nature, asserted itself; and the spirit of the Levite falters not, though the heart of him is profoundly sad. Nor does his simple confidence deceive him; for ever in God's universe hope is power, and faith, possession. So gently, that the manly nature of Louis could know no dishonor in its acceptance, his noble comrades in renunciation come forward and, uniting their funds, enable the youth of Ardèche

to make the passage of the sea,—to consummate his heroic sacrifice. In after years when the material debt had been paid to those beloved comrades, the golden debt of affectionate gratitude remained a cherished bond upon the soul of the son of Lavaudieu.

Out from the din and depression, from the clamor and cloud of the fair and terrible city, the beautiful sepulchre where riot guards and ruin dwells, into the free, pure air of the open country, our missionaries speed in company with the foreign Bishop. As the train plunges into the fresh heart of the smiling provinces, the oppressed spirit of our Levite revives. Again, the great soul of nature folds the youth unto her bosom, the calm gospels of the trees, the sublime message of the mountains, the cool breath of the rippling streams. A soft, unutterable joy suffuses his being, for joy is the greatest of all things; and somewhere, in the midst of the darkest hour, the most dreaded trial, joy must give its kiss to the spirit that is true.

With hearts rejuvenated and made stronger, our exiles enter the ancient city of Havre. The majesty of the great docks leaves its impress

upon the minds of the young seminarians. There, Commerce makes her mighty throne, and Trade clasps her girdle around the world.

One last, strange day in France when a thousand emotions succeed each other in the heart of our Levite, where, like the sunset beyond the quay, the lights and shadows alternate their gleam and gloom, in infinite succession.

France! the mother of a thousand heroes and the martyred parent of misguided sons! Nation made by saint and sage, and marred by sense and sinner. A dying Titaness strangling in her blood.

And after the day, the evening comes, and the silent mists draw their veils over land and sea.

## CHAPTER VI

### INTERMEZZO

Dawn unfolds like a rose upon the east, shedding a faint blush upon quay and ocean, kindling a glory upon the roofs and spires of the ancient city of Havre and flushing the masts of the sleeping craft that lie motionless within the harbor. As the blush of day crimsons upon land and sea, the dull roar of commerce arises from the quay, deepening, gathering strength each moment, answering the endless sob of the Atlantic with the endless sob of the children of men—heirs of the travail of civilization.

The noble steamer chafes at her moorings and the restless figurehead seems impatient to keep her tryst with the far off harbor of the Western world. Every pant of the huge engine, now making steam for the outward voyage, sends a quiver through the giant sinews of the ocean queen and through the tingling nerves of the son of Lavaudieu, who stands silently upon deck,

absorbed by the mournful majesty of the scene. In company with the Bishop of Mississippi and his three companions of the Seminary, Louis Vally has passed the night on board—a night of fitful sleep and of feverish and depressing dreams. The inexperienced travelers were unaccustomed to the shrill whistle of the engineer and the demons of unrest and nostalgia seemed to weave a horrid spell above their pillows. To the pleasure seeker, about to leave his native country for the first time, if only for a few months' dalliance amid the historic places of a foreign land, there comes, at the moment of embarking, a deep melancholy that gathers like a mighty shadow and slowly wraps both soul and heart in gloom. The voices of country and of the fireside call softly to his spirit; the very soil seems to stretch caressing arms toward him—arms whose sweet endearments he must put from him firmly, but oh! how tenderly. To the son of France, this deep love of the soil has become a part of his inmost nature. Go where he will, always the voice of France is calling; always, the phantom *fleurs-de-lis* are blooming above the alien banners of the world.

And if that child of France be likewise an exile, though a voluntary one; and if to the sense of exile be added the stern forebodings, the unknown terrors of the life of the missionary; then the parting with his native shores becomes a triple agony which only the heart of the Man of Sorrow can measure or can comprehend.

Every moment—with the broadening day—the din and bustle of the wharf grows more tumultuous; the haggard lips of Commerce utter ceaseless discordant shrieks; the ghoulish heart of Civilization beats its wild measure for the frantic toil of men. Anon, on the quay, stands a naked human heart upon which the grief of parting with some beloved one has stamped the royal heraldry of tears. To such a heart some drooping heart and head on shipboard give mute but vivid answer. But deeper depths may human anguish sound,—depths measureless as the unfathomed core of ocean. And on the decks of many ships, as on the steamer where stand our exiles, are voyageurs whose hearts can touch no answering heart—hearts denied the sacred grief of parting, hearts that, in some holy cause, have broken the living tendrils of affection and their

life-blood flows upon the soul. Denied even the mournful privilege of farewell to his dear ones, is the heart of Louis Vally ; and dwelling apart in its solitude of woe, the tortured spirit is but dimly conscious of the magnificent pamorama upon every side. Around him is the epitome of the world. Craft from every land ; pennons of every nation. Barks from the frozen North, from the far South seas, from the fragrant Orient, from the great Americas. One by one, while the morning rose unfolds and the crimson stain grows deeper in the harbor, the vessels spread their mighty wings and, like giant birds, move majestically through the blushing waters in endless, mute succession toward the bar. One by one, the crafts are caught by the eager sea and hidden in its immensity—dissolved like shadows in the infinite. But the pathos, the deep tragedy of the scene sinks into the spirit of Simon Vally's son, although his physical vision seems unconscious of its spell. And the sharp and swift realization of its significance falls like a blow upon his heart and brain, as a sudden lurch of the vessel, newly loosed from her moorings, arouses our Levite to the keen perception of

his environment. Tremendous energies are at work around him—powers of spirit, of nature, and of will. And above all and through all, comes the solemn chant of the open sea. The glorious vision lies heavily upon the soul of the youth; and the infinite misery and infinite need of the great, blind world on shore, speaks a message to his breaking heart. What matters individual suffering, when such universal anguish is clamoring for relief? What matters individual sacrifice, when countless hecatombs of men are being tortured to the death in the sacrificial fires of Mammon? What matters anything, but that rescue should come to these panting, haggard millions—here and everywhere? What matters anything but SALVATION? And the voice of the ocean seems to repeat the mighty word:—SALVATION.

Slowly, silently, like a ship in a dream, the vessel glides between the avenue of craft that lines the harbor. The motley multitude upon the quay shrinks in size until it seems composed of the people of Lilliput. One by one, the discordant noises of civilization are lost in the deepening roar of the ocean. Suddenly, across the shimmering

waters upon which the first sun-ray has traced a regal pathway, come the faint notes of the morning Angelus!

The rose in the heavens scatters its petals over the radiant East; all the nearer waters are flected with phantom petals. Fainter and fainter grows the distant shore—now, like an iridescent ribbon; now, fading to soft pearl, now,—hark! an exulting breaker shouts unto the ship, raising its Gorgon-like head on high, hurling its writhing foam serpents into the air. The mighty challenge rolls on deck; the ocean claims the gallant vessel, and France becomes a dear and mournful memory. Gray sea-birds gather around the mast, the green waters curdle into sparkling spray, and from the hearts of the exiles and from the heart of the ocean, deep answers unto deep, immensity unto immensity.

Let the soul that would learn the sublimest lesson of the universe, the soul that would thrill with vivid inspiration, and would drink at the living fountains of thought, seek the mountains or the open sea. There, its double kinship to the Maker and His works will be keenly realized; there his oneness with the universe will fire his

faculties with holy energy, will deepen and glorify the powers of brain and spirit. The same enthusiasm that bids the lark spring upward to the dawn, that evokes the moonlit rhapsodies of the mocking-bird, and weaves the ecstasy of the nightingale upon the rose; that makes the seed give birth within the sod and the plant to grow beneath the sun, steals with vital power through the human faculties from the sublime solitudes of the physical world, and causes them to germinate and blossom and bear eternal fruit. The soul that has known the sea is glorified and exalted for all future time.

By Louis Vally, keenly alive from earliest childhood to the subtle influence of nature, the power of the ocean is felt with more than common force. There are moments of fine enthusiasm when the pulses of his being beat in rhythm with the great heart of the deep. There are moments of exaltation, of power, of insight, when the strength of the sea enters into his veins and pours the strong wine of spiritual vitality upon his thirsting heart. There are radiant mornings when the dawn opens one by

one its beaming gates of gold and opal, of rose and chrysoprase and amethyst, and all the sea is flecked with living gems cast by the largess of the King. There are wonderful evenings when the glories of the New Jerusalem kindle on the waves, and the evening star, bright herald of the moon, unrolls a golden carpet on the deep that the Queen of Night may tread thereon. Now, out of her glittering palace in the sea the Silver Sovereign ascends, thrilling the atmosphere with rapturous light, kindling wide, iridescent glory upon the ocean, kindling a light within the spirits of our exiles, a light that is clothed with melody and finds expression in the hymn of the Salve Regina.

Far out upon the infinite silence, upon the glorious night, floats the musical voice of the child of Lavaudieu. Something of the strength of the sea steals into it, something of the exultation of the wonderful hour; his companions listen spellbound; the youth has never sung like this. Truly, he has never done so. For, since the last song in the Seminary of Le Puy, and the first song upon the royal sea, the nature of the lad has deepened, and far upon the path of spiritual

insight the Levite has been led by the power of the mysterious deep.

But in the law of spiritual and of intellectual progress, as in the law of physical growth, retrogression must be ever a factor. It is the dicta of the universe from which there is no appeal. Between mountain peak and mountain peak the valleys must intervene; between the regal crests of the waves of ocean, the deep hollows must be plowed. Between the Tabors of vision the prophet must descend into Gethsemane, between the Sinais of Revelation, the soul must dwell in the Gorge of Desolation.

And to Louis Vally come the days of gloom and despondency, when the sullen sea reflects his soul's depression. Over the angry waste of waters his sorrowful spirit wanders to his home at Lavaudieu, the home made desolate by his desertion and by his seeming ingratitude to its inmates. At other times, on the strong wings of the winds, his soul rushes outward to that Western World, and the mystery and anguish and awful need thereof rise up as evil genii and slay the heart within him. In such hours, more than any other, the kindly sympathy of the fa-

therlike prelate brings its healing unction, but there are moments when the struggling spirit seeks no human solace, but lives alone with the ocean and the ocean's King.

All too slowly for the eager zeal of the young missionaries, yet too rapidly for the lovers of nature's high communion, pass the holy days upon the deep. From out of the immensity of waters a sacred peace ascends, lifting the soul of Louis Vally to nobler heights, even to the sun-kissed plateau where all is calm. True, the storms of ocean will return, and on the broader sea of human life the mighty hurricanes will lash the soul to nameless agony; the waves of fear will beat upon the spirit, the breakers of unrest will bruise the exile's heart; above all, the tempest of evil, the whirlpool of human infidelity, will lash his soul relentlessly. But the strength that has come to the spirit of Louis Vally from the spirit of the strong Atlantic has made of his nature a sturdy battlement against which the fiercest seas will beat in vain.

This last, great night upon the ocean the moon comes late unto the sea, but showers such an effulgence thereon that the seraphim's hosannas

seemed coined into radiance and to weave a symphony upon the deep; every wave is a glittering canticle, every hollow, a silver psalm. Glory encompasses the world, and the deep, translucent heaven opens to its inmost recesses, world beyond world, star beyond star. It is a night of revelation, night of inspiration. Softly, upon the rapturous hour, fall the notes of the "Ave Maris Stella"—glory unto glory, light unto light.

For the last time, the exiles sing upon the sea, and for a wonderful instant, the night, the glory and the vessel are hidden from them. On the wings of melody they are lifted to the great realm of spirit (the home of the exile, the home of the soul) that interpenetrates and vivifies all things. Once more the voice of Louis Vally steals over the sea; now,—the shrill call of the watchman aloft:—

"Land ho! Land ho!"

The bluff tones of the captain are heard close by:—

"Look messieurs," pointing to a dim line that shows like a cloud upon the western horizon, "we shall be in port at sunrise."

# PART II

"Faith steps out on seeming void,
And finds the solid rock."

## CHAPTER VII

### THE PASSAGE OF THE WILDERNESS

THE morning star floats like a seraph upon the awakening East, as the myriad lights of New York harbor arise in slow succession from the sea. The lights twinkle like fireflies against the spectral background of the sky throwing out tangled threads of luminance upon the water, but above them the star shines calmly on. The spirits of the young missionaries kindle as the morning mists withdraw their veils from the superb tableau of the American metropolis, revealing its glittering majesty to their eager vision. Nova terra! land of a royal line of intrepid apostles, Land of Columbus, Land of Washington! Something of the magnitude, the power, the significance of this collossal Republic comes to birth within the soul of each of the exiles. Nova terra! repeat the hearts of the dauntless quartette; the old life has fallen from them, the friends most dear, the familiar scenes, the be-

loved firesides. Nova terra! echoes the intellect of the Levites;—land of civil and religious liberty, land of glorious possibilities. Nova terra! reechoes the spirits of the exiles;—land of unknown labors, of strenuous struggles, of supreme triumphs! Nova terra! nova terra!

But all the while, their lips are silent, and not a word is uttered as the young seminarians, surrounding Monseigneur Elder, pass over the huge gangway and step upon American soil.

Upon the crowded quay the heart-beats of our mighty civilization are almost audible; but in other scenes than this before them are the lives of our missionaries to be passed. Away from the great metropolis, beyond the vast prairies, beyond the forest primeval, southward and still southward, past the Father of Waters, the mighty Mississippi, in the region where immemorial pines chant their eternal dirges to the Mexican Sea, will these eager sons of France plant the standard of the King. Avoiding all unnecessary delay, our party hastens to Baltimore, through golden grain fields where Ruth might have gleaned and a Boaz loved. On to the stately city of Washington, through valleys

teeming with mellow fruit; by mountains embossed with emerald-like farms and studded with grazing herds. Our exiles are being but ill prepared for the valley of desolation into which they will enter a few months later when the sorrowful South receives them into her bosom.

The acorn from which has sprung the noble forest of St. Mary's College was the humble brick schoolhouse in which M. Dubois, a zealous member of the Society of St. Sulpice, taught and catechised the sturdy youth of the Cumberlands and which he subsequently exchanged for a more commodious log tenement on the rise of the hill.

Tiny, indeed, seemed the little, rough habitation that sheltered the nucleus of the now famous Seminary; simple and inconspicuous as is the beginning of all great things and exemplifying the practical truth, the profound philosophy of the exhortation:—"Seek ye the kingdom of God and all . . . things shall be added unto you." And the breath of the Spirit moved within that cabin school, the power of the Spirit overshadowed it, and the wisdom of the Spirit guided it; and from the rude logs of that humble domicile have arisen the stately halls and noble colon-

nades of St. Mary's College. Instead of the handful of pupils with a single teacher, the great Seminary accommodates upwards of two hundred students to-day, and the large and gifted faculty numbers about fifteen professors.

Men have gone forth from the walls of this institution whose names the nations love to praise. Among the eminent divines who hail her "Alma Mater" is His Eminence, James, Cardinal Gibbons, author, critic and philosopher, whose splendid productions are the pride of American literature and the glory of the American Church.

St. Mary's Seminary is the American Le Puy. Under the guidance of its trained Sulpicians, who do the work of specialists in preparing young candidates for the priesthood, have studied some of the brainiest prelates, the noblest missionaries, the most efficient priests that modern times have known. Upon that Order, indeed, seems to have descended the fullness of the power of Aaron.

Once more within academic halls and meeting therein not less than twenty-five of their own countrymen, the drooping spirits of our exiles revive for the nonce, though the speedy depar-

ture of their venerable *companion du voyage* casts a shade upon the sunshine of their welcome.

To Louis Vally, the parting with Monseigneur Elder was even more painful than to the others. The youth of Lavaudieu had isolated himself from all that the heart most values by his abrupt departure from his native land, and had forfeited the confidence of the beloved guardians of his childhood, the inmates of his home. In consequence of his course of action, the kindly prelate of Mississippi stood to him as the sole representative of human affection, the single source to which he could turn for sympathy in the stern and stormy future that awaited him. The tender-hearted Bishop was also deeply affected. More than the responsibility of a parent seemed to have devolved upon him and, as on the memorable day at Le Puy, the day of revelation, the prelate clasped his spiritual son in his embrace. But the separation was not to be a long one, for by the next Christmas-tide the members of our little band were reunited.

After the storms of spirit and of heart through which the four Levites had passed between the evening of the Bishop's visit to the French Sem-

inary and that of their arrival in Baltimore; after the sacrifice, the partings, the passage of the sea, the clouds of stirring incident pass away for the time, leaving the blue heaven of peace within their spirits. The restful atmosphere of St. Mary's penetrates the inmost recesses of their being and, with feelings akin to happiness, the exiles devote themselves to the study of the language of their adopted country. The large number of Frenchmen present, however, and the constant temptation to relapse into the music of their native tongue, now doubly dear to their homesick hearts, prevented every one of our quartette from making rapid progress. For Louis Vally, the difficulty was even greater than for his comrades; and to the last moment of his life, the most sacred utterances of his heart were always voiced in the rhythmic tongue that lends itself to high emotion, and merges as naturally into song as the river merges into the ocean. But here, as at Le Puy, the sweetness of his nature and the light of his spirit made him universally and tenderly beloved, and softened those obstacles to progress that, in the pathway of learning, always beset his tardy feet. And all

the toil and struggle and practical failure of his endeavors to master the intricacies of English, were hidden by the attractive mantle of his inexhaustible humor. A wise man has said that "Humor is grace"; experience teaches that humor is power; and its electric current was never lost in the ocean of his triumphant life.

At Mount St. Mary's, as in Paris, the clerical cassock and rabais of the seminarian had to be discarded during outdoor exercise, for citizens' dress and the uncompromising stovepipe hat. To the peasant of Ardèche the head-gear in question seems to have been a veritable *bête noir*. The transition from the flat, broad-brimmed chapeau of Le Puy to the insignia of aldermanic dignity and Wall Street complacency, was startling, indeed; and no new made prisoner ever donned his stripes with more reluctance than the lad of Lavaudieu, his stovepipe. But even in that emergency, the humor of the situation brought its unction.

The sun of a bonny day has nearly run its course in Maryland, as the four recruits of Monseigneur Elder, dressed in the obnoxious costume, sally forth from the Seminary to stroll amid its

beautiful suburbs. The picturesque country and, above all, the voice of the mountains, calls them; and accustomed to long walks in France, the comrades stroll unconsciously on, until the decline of the afternoon warns them that they have wandered far, indeed, and must return at once if they would reach the Seminary in time for the evening office. But lo! to come was one question; to return, another; and as they endeavor to direct their steps homeward, it is found that not one of the quartette has any idea of the way. What is to be done? The inexorable sun sinks deeper into the west; oh! for some Joshua to arrest its speed. Long, level rays shoot like lances down the forest aisles, and the deep flush of the western sky creeps slowly up the zenith. A night in the whispering woods were not so dreadful, but that would call forth the indignation, the amazement of the professors. The solemn shadows look as if they might shelter some Hiawatha, some kindly Chactus who would lead them home; surely help will come anon.

Our grown up babes in the woods heave a sigh of relief, as an aged negro, a veritable "Uncle Remus," emerges from the shadow of the forest

on his homeward path after a day of tree-felling. Simultaneously, in full dress Parisian, the four begin to speak. Now, as the amazed expression of the sable newcomer is observed, a look of consternation springs from face to face, and the seminarians stare despairingly at each other:—"*Il ne comprends pas.*"

Truly, "*il ne comprends pas.*" The Senegambian does not understand, nor can ever be made to understand anything but cotton-field English though our innocents gesticulate until doomsday.

The situation grows tragical; the rose light deepens into purple; the full moon comes out sedately and looks quizzically on, and one by one, the little stars peer down and twinkle merrily at the fun. Growing exasperated at the darky's irresponsiveness, the civil Frenchmen—to a man—doff their stovepipe hats and, bowing low before the dusky auditor, repeat the one word, "Indicate."

"Indicate," sings de Mourenger, his courtly figure swaying with emotion, "Indicate."

"Indicate," shrieks Florimond Blanc, his arms swinging from side to side like an inebriated wind-mill.

"Indicate," cries Louis Vally, the word becoming almost a groan. With starting eyes and protruding tongue, the darky gazes upon the strangers, rolling his great orbs until only the whites are visible, and slowly backing, step by step, away from the mysterious quartette. Night is beginning to fall; the big shadows walk like ghosts beneath the trees; from a hollow cypress, the weird hoot of an owl is heard at intervals. "Indicate," scream the seminarians in chorus, and the owl answers, "Indicate."

"Indicate," mourn the Frenchmen. The owl repeats "Indicate." "Indicate," bellow the seminarians, and the owl—but Uncle Remus doesn't stay to hear what the owl repeats. The terrified African, now assured that the strangers are "hoodooing" him, utters a cabalistic word to undo the "conjur," wheels swiftly about, and runs like Brer Rabbit when Brer Wolf is after him. All the bogies of the forest are at his heels; every spook of which his mammy ever told him, takes after him as in his piccaninny days and, running at mad speed, the African pitches straight into a respectable citizen of Baltimore. Gesticulating, in his turn, to the aston-

ished pedestrian, the latter is made to understand that something is wrong with the forest. Proceeding to investigate matters, he comes abruptly upon our four Frenchmen, and a little more gesticulation and the rescuer's homœopathic knowledge of "*Parlez vous*," settles the difficulty. A trifle after hours, the belated students reenter the Seminary, but the story they tell disarms the wrath of the faculty. The peaceful days at St. Mary's pass swiftly and upon soundless wings; the restful presence of the Great Queen Patroness of the institution is everywhere felt and the subtle atmosphere of calm speaks its holy mandate, "Peace, be still," to every spirit. A sweet and calm monotony pervades the classic halls, and over the soul and heart of the youth of Lavaudieu falls the peace that earth cannot give or take away. But there comes a day when the hand of illness presses rudely upon his frame, and in the great school of the Master, the young student is to learn another lesson. Step by step, the Supreme Teacher is leading from height to height the peasant youth who is destined to stand one day upon the sacred Hill of Wisdom. The terrible grip of inflamma-

tory rheumatism seizes upon his members and holds them as in a vise. From sinew to sinew, from limb to limb, the subtle, serpent-like pain creeps surely on; and after battling bravely against its inexorable power, Louis Vally succumbs. The Levite is placed upon his bed of suffering and, for the time, all things seem to end. Greater than the torture of racked nerves and burning frame, more paralyzing than the fetters of agony that bind the members of his body, is the fearful numbness that overwhelms his mental energies. One by one, as the stars go out at the approach of the thunder-cloud, the lights of his spirit, the shining constellations of his hopes, his longings, his high ambitions in regard to his future work, are extinguished. Further and further the life and glorious labors of the missionary recede. From every side the shores fall back; the old life, he has abandoned, the new, abandons him. Closer and closer press the grim spectres of despondency, of loneliness, of disappointment. Deeper and deeper grow the shadows, but the light is shining still. In the blackest midnight of despair, in the fiercest storm of sorrow, the Light shines ever on. As

the valleys praise the mountains and the shadows praise the sun; as the deepest depths attest the noblest heights, so the very blackness of the spirit's gloom bears witness of the glory that lies beyond the dark. And suddenly, as though a glittering star ray pierces through the midnight of the sufferer's soul, flashes a vivid inspiration that gives him courage anew, and sends the electric thrill of hope through tortured soul and body. Out of the Infinite Mind comes the suggestion to invoke the Patron of the Universal Church in his extremity—the powerful Prime Minister of the King whose intercession had procured the recruits in prompt response to the petition of the Bishop of Mississippi. Speaking to the mighty Patriarch as a child would address a well beloved guardian, the youth of Lavaudieu exclaims:

"You brought me here, St. Joseph, it is your duty to take care of me. Either find a way for me to return to my country and my people, or heal me of this sickness and allow me to perform the duties for which I came."

It is now the beautiful day of Maundy Thursday, the day on which the Divine Foster son of

the Patriarch went forth to seal his tremendous mission. Does some memory of the tender past steal amid the uncreated joys of Paradise into the great heart of the Carpenter, and bid Him give immediate heed to the follower of His Blessed Ward and enable the stricken volunteer to go, likewise, forth to Tabor and Calvary? Let the chorus of souls who have experienced sudden renewals in body and mind make answer; and down the ages from the far time when Elias arose from his physical prostration and Saul from his moral inertia; when Lazarus came forth from his tomb and the daughter of Jairus from her couch; when new life beat in the frozen heart of the son of the widow of Nain.

When Easter morning dawned above Mount St. Mary's, just four days after the simple petition of the lad of Ardèche, Louis Vally had sufficiently recovered from his illness to accompany his fellow students upon a pleasure jaunt to a spot several miles distant from the college! Little wonder then, that the spiritual and moral energies of the young missionary were increased a thousandfold.

As the tumultuous waves of pain receded from

his body, the gloom withdrew from mind and spirit and every faculty emerged exalted, purified and ennobled by the tempest; and upon every hope hung, dew-like, the jewel drops of renewed and deepened life. Another mountain has been scaled by the lad of Lavaudieu; another plateau has been reached in his ascending pathway to the new Jerusalem; and through all his subsequent life, the inspiration of that fine experience burned like a celestial beacon. From that day forth, his faith was merged in vision; and the voice of his ministry and the voice of his spirit chanted ceaselessly the canticle of Simeon:—"Mine eyes have beheld the Lord"; and with the Royal Poet,—"O Lord my God, I cried unto Thee, and Thou hast healed me. . . . For with Thee is the fountain of life; in Thy light shall we see light."

As in the hour of dawn, the variant lights play and interplay, shine and shimmer and merge, anon, into each other;—now, royal purple—now, sombre gray—now, rose, and finally gold, the imperial precursor of the orb of day; so in human life the lights and shadows, the tyrian of triumph, the rose flush of enthusiasm, and the

dull hues of despondency and seeming failure, melt and mingle and succeed each other with kaleidoscopic harmony, to be merged at last in the eternal splendors of the Sun of Justice.

St. Mary's Seminary, its mountains and its shrine, now slowly fade from our mental vision. In place of the peace and the silence thereof, comes the rush and tumult of a railroad train as three of our exiles, de Mourenger, Blanc and Louis Vally, become traveling companions once again;—the young Chevalier remains at the Seminary.

Swiftly, into the desolate heart of the South rushes the panting engine. Past plantations, where the palatial homes of the merchant princes lie mouldering in awful ruin; the white shafts of the columns like prostrate giants amid the polluting weeds, the gaunt frames of the negro cabins with their tottering chimneys pointing like grimy fingers to the insensate blue of heaven. Past the rudely-marked mounds piled over ghastly trenches where southern chivalry is festering in the dust; past sinister battle-fields where hastily-constructed memorials mark the red footprints of war; past scorched and desolate acres where

the withering camp-fire has burned, or the destructive torch been lighted, leaving the spot a blackened wilderness. On and on, deeper and deeper into the desolation,—the man-made desert; the very soil is a universal sob, and the solemn mosses of the ancient, battle-scarred trees lend funeral drapery for the universal obsequies. Gradually, about the responsive heart of Louis Vally, gathers something of the deadly desolation; but the ardent fires of the missionary spirit burn more brightly for the gloom, and from them issues, phœnix-like, the perfect zeal of the apostle.

Here in this wilderness of woe, the Levite beholds his work; here, where heart and soil are parched by the burning simoon of war that has swept over them; here, where the South, like Rachel, weeps beside her dead; where Faith has furled her sun-bright wings and dwells silently beside the tomb; and Religion flees, like an exiled seraph, from her fanes. The shadow of a mighty cross lies on all things; only the touch of the Tree of Golgotha can vivify its crushing weight.

At such thoughts as these the eager soul of

the Vallys' son bounds forward. Oh! for the wings of the eagle to rush onward. And tardily, for his restless ardor, the swinging train speeds on.

The Mississippi, like a gigantic moccasin, unwinds its gloomy coils against the dense forests of the Southern horizon. With their first glimpse of the Father of Waters that stretches his mighty length across the immensity of this Republic, the enthusiasm of the Levites is kindled anew, as kindled the hearts of La Salle, of De Soto, of Père Marquette, of the army of heroic pioneers, in contemplation of its sinister grandeur. Stream of mysterious memories! River of a wild and ruthless past chanting its dread secrets to the immemorial pines that bend their holy brows to listen!

At a little burg in the State of Mississippi known as Hill City, our travelers leave the train and take passage upon one of the river steamers. After journeying about twelve hours in and out of the devious windings of the stream the haughty hills of Natchez show like crouching buffalo in the distance. One by one, the monsters shake out their rugged limbs until they rise to their

full stature against the sky line; the scars of the historic bluffs are now discernible—bluffs whereon the pennons of four nations have flung their colors to the breeze; the red and gold of Spain, the lilies of France, the Lion of St. George, the stars of the Confederacy; and further back within the ages, before hidalgo and chevalier, before English trader and Southern patriot, when the royal race of red men—kings, indeed, upon a kingly soil,—dwelt upon their ancestral cliffs, the blazing symbol of the Sun gleamed beacon-like from the bluffs, and marked the imperial teepee of the Tamerlane of the Western world. Upon this hill, the Sacred Fire burned ceaselessly upon the altar of the Spirit; from yon high promontory, the maiden Le-an-Noor leaped with her lover into the mighty waters. A little further on, the outline of Fort Rosalie can be seen; —the Fort named for the beautiful Countess of Pontchartrain; within its breastworks the whole French garrison (with a single exception) were massacred, in 1729, by the powerful Natchez tribe from which the present city takes its name.

Upon the town itself, as upon the surrounding country, the hand of War had pressed; its lurid

footprints are everywhere visible, its baleful influence breathes stagnation, poverty and spiritual starvation. The few, meagre cotton bales upon the landing in lieu of the snowy thousands formerly shipped by the lordly planters to New Orleans, tell a melancholy story; and a scanty importation of provisions and household goods is seen upon the wharf, in place of the abundant luxuries that hitherto poured upon the landing from the four quarters of the globe to minister to the comfort of the Sybarite masters of the chateau.

Silent are the halls of Concord, where their Excellencies, the colonial Governors, have dwelt in oriental splendor; where a stately pageant of the great men of several centuries has passed,—Louis Phillipe, when the exiled Dauphin of France; the courtly De Lafayette, and later, Sargent S. Prentiss and others no less notable. The gloom of stagnation lies upon all things; too soon for reconstruction, too soon for anything but inanition,—the unlovely period of transition before the South can gather her scattered forces, or arouse her dormant energies.

In the vast wilderness of Mississippi, the little

missions are few and far removed from each other, and a callous indifference,—almost an unconsciousness of spiritual things—is begotten of the torpor that lies upon all hearts.

The diocese of Natchez was, at that time, one of the poorest in the South. The Roman Catholic population was small and destitute, verily, the mustard seed from which was to arise a wondrous growth. Three or four churches only had their resident priests, and those were scattered throughout the immense area of a state whose inhabitants belonged to the various Protestant denominations. Natchez, Jackson, Vicksburg and Bay St. Louis had pastors; but for many years, the entire eastern portion of Mississippi had only the little chapel at Paulding. Most of those widely separated missions could be reached only on foot or on horseback, there being little or no railroad communication at that period. Such was the early field of Monseigneur Leray, afterward Archbishop of New Orleans; of Père Grignon, subsequently the beloved Vicar General of the Diocese, and of Père Mouton, who merits the title of Pioneer of the Faith. In addition to the difficulties of travel, the Yellow Plague

lifted its horrid head by every swamp and prairie of the state. With the advent of the dog days the loathsome monster would creep from its secret lairs and breathe deadly poison upon the atmosphere. No medieval knight with brazen shield ever did battle with such a foe; St. George never met so vile an enemy, nor Dante, such a Cerberus. Into the insatiate maw of this many headed monster, the gallant missionaries cast the bread of charity, the strong meat of self-abnegation, and the hot heart's blood of martyrdom.

In the city of Natchez the light of Faith burned low and fitfully. The poverty stricken congregation struggled to take out a scanty livelihood; heavy debt weighed upon the cathedral and the spiritual energies of the people seemed, for the time, in a state of lethargy.

Again, the depression of their environment reacts upon the hearts of the young missionaries; even across the sanguine soul of Louis Vally a freezing doubt casts the shadow of its clammy wings. But the glory of the Light bursts forth in this, as in his former hours of spiritual depres-

sion; bursts forth in all its power and beauty, when the Bishop of Mississippi, coming forth to welcome the three Levites, clasps the youth of Lavaudieu once more to his bosom. And Jacob thrilled with no purer delight as he pressed the young Benjamin to his rejoicing heart.

## CHAPTER VIII

### VOX POPULI

One who has watched beside a summer pool and seen its crystal clearness suddenly overshadowed by the dusky wings of some passing bird, beholds the physical image of the swift advent of sorrow to the human heart. Now the crystal waters of the spirit are flashing in the golden noon of peace; in its shining depths, a thousand sunbeams play; upon its breast, the shimmering ripples spread like circling rainbows. Suddenly, some nameless woe, some gloom from out the infinite, descends lightning-like upon it. The sunbeams die, the rainbow withers, the light goes out in sombre shadow. The law of nature is the law of spirit, the law of life and death, are one,—the laws of joy and sorrow, of grief and grace, of inspiration and of sin. Always the vital moments, the deep emotions, the fierce temptations, the immortal impulses spring suddenly from the universe of spirit, bringing light

or gloom, death or Promethean fire, to the startled human soul.

And in the tiny hamlet of Lavaudieu, beyond the great Atlantic, the "life that never was on land or sea"—the sunlight of the spirit—shines upon the hearts of Simon and Marie Vally. The wheels of the good wife's loom flash in the radiant morning, and as the shining shuttle darts to and fro, an immortal fabric is weaving simultaneously thread by thread, inch by inch with the homespun. Into the woof and warp of this invisible fabric, the thrifty housewife weaves the skeins of hope, of high ambition, of tender yearning for the son of her heart—her last born —her noble lad who will one day stand before the altar, the lad who even now, perhaps, amid all the learned professors of Le Puy is thinking of his mother, in Ardèche, is working out his holy calling, is becoming great and well beloved of men.

A sudden snap! an ugly snarl, the homespun is blemished! Intent upon unravelling the unsightly knot, Marie Vally does not hear the sharp rap of the peasant beside the open door. Another knock, a little more peremptory, and the matron

starts violently, letting the unfinished homespun fall in a tangled heap to the ground. "What wilt thou have at this early hour, neighbor ——?" But the inquiry dies upon her lips as the peasant holds a great envelope high into the air. "Something thou wilt not refuse, good mother, but this time, 'tis I that am the giver." Almost snatching the letter from the neighbor's hand, Marie Vally hastily tears open the covering—letters are rare incidents in Lavaudieu, and this one must be from Louis,—Louis, her only correspondent. Surely, it has come in answer to the dreams beside the loom, as scarcely a fortnight has passed since his last message; the lad is not wont to write so often. For a moment, the bearer stands within the doorway, half in curiosity, half in sympathy, watching the beaming countenance of the woman. He is about to turn away, however, when a sudden change in the face of the reader rivets him to the spot.

The erstwhile radiant face is frozen, ghastly pale, Marie Vally stares at the paper as one distraught; then, before the astonished peasant can make one step forward, sinks—with a slight moan—heavily to the ground.

For a few moments, while the letter bearer hastens to the vineyard to summon Simon, Marie lies in a deathlike swoon, the mysterious message crushed in her right hand. Beside her, the tangled threads of the homespun lie, a hopeless ruin; within her spirit the other fabric with all its golden patterns, dissolves into nothingness. Scarcely fifty yards from his domicile, Simon Vally is pruning diligently, the too luxuriant tendrils of his vineyard. The first hue of amethyst is stealing over the heavy clusters; the harvest will be a fine one. No time must be lost, and John, the eldest son of the Vallys, works diligently beside his parent; even the deft fingers of the lass, Marguerite, are called into requisition. Not a fleck is seen upon the dazzling azure of the sky. The soft odors of June played caressingly around them; the musical tinkle of the sheep bells, the far off lowing of the cows is heard: the subtle, nameless peace of the summer noon bathes all things, entering into the hearts of the laborers and weaving there, as in the heart of Marie Vally, its beautiful, ill-defined vision. . All of the workers turn hastily as the panting messenger comes within call;—"Haste! haste; Simon, thy

good wife hath been stricken!" For the three toilers, all the June day lies dead; and by its bier, the solemn shadows stand. With one accord, they cast aside the pruning knives and rush toward the cottage. Hastening across the threshold, the distracted husband and children cast themselves upon their knees beside the insensible form of Marie Vally. The quick eye of Simon discovers the crushed paper in the hand of his wife. Almost forcibly disengaging it from her convulsive grasp, he casts a rapid glance at its contents. The same swift, stony horror seems to chill his features to marble; with trembling hand, and in utter silence, he passes the paper to his son. Marguerite creeps to her brother's side and reads with him in silence:—

"My dear Parents:—

"My future address will be Baltimore, Maryland, U. S. A. *Adieu.*

"Your affectionate son,

Louis Vally."

Not a word passes between the stricken members of the family; upon them all has come a numbness; a sort of temporary paralysis. All hearts are turned to the prostrate Marie. Mutely,

Simon passes out of the room and draws fresh water from the well. At its cool touch, Marie stirs slightly. The closed lids quiver painfully; now the eyes of Marie meet the eyes of Simon. In that one heart-breaking look, the unutterable anguish of each is spoken. Reverently, John and Marguerite turn aside; another moment, and Marie is clasped in the convulsive embrace of her husband: now come his first words:—"It is the will of God, my wife; we must bear it bravely." But scarcely have the words unloosed the pent up emotions of his overcharged heart, when a flood of sorrow bursts its bonds, and a burning torrent of tears rushes from the eyes of the agonized father; for an instant, Simon is oblivious of his surroundings and the tremendous anguish of outraged paternity takes its headlong course. But out of the awful tempest comes a sudden calm. His streaming eyes fall accidentally upon the figure of the Crucified,—the outraged Brother of a graceless kindred, a woe beyond all other woes, a desolation beyond all other desolations. And suddenly, as upon the waves of the Sea of Galilee upon the Gennesareth of his spirit he hears the Master's voice: "Be still"; and again from

the depths of his now chastened anguish, Simon Vally sobs aloud:—"My wife, my children, it is the will of God, He will teach us how to bear it." But through the words of consolation, the tears flow on;—tears fed by the fountains of the inmost spirit; tears that are never to cease until the eyes of Simon Vally are withered and his vision, for more than a year, almost quenched in darkness. Beholding the deep anguish of her husband, Marie Vally rises; by a heroic effort gathers up the ruined homespun. With her first glance at the fabric, the overwhelming memory of the morning's vision sweeps over her, and for the first time, the mother also weeps; the awful dryness has passed; the crushed spirit finds relief. Sorrowfully replacing the torn linen upon the loom, Marie recommences her labors.

Always amid death and anguish and breaking of hearts the shuttles must fly, the wheels must turn. In the iron mechanism of toil the soul is caught and kneaded and fashioned into greater and more imperishable beauty. The red blood stains the shuttles, and tears make facile, the awful mechanism; sometimes the heart's blood itself runs between the wheels; but all the while, the

immortal cloth is being woven, and the spirit is being molded into the likeness of its Maker. And in the manacles of labor, the fetters that, in reality, are purest gold, the hearts of the Vallys are caught and recreated.

Back to the vineyard, goes the noble Simon, accompanied by his eldest, *now* his *only son.* Over the frame of the vine grower, the semblance of age has stolen; his gait is somewhat irregular; his shoulders are slightly stooped. Great emotions are infinite. In all soul crises the element of time is obliterated, and the spirit owes its kinship to eternity, its heritage of immortality. Moments do the work of years. And the anguish of the foregoing hour has deposed the vine grower from the strength of manhood to the feebleness of old age. Within the cottage, the maiden Marguerite sits beside her stricken mother, aiding her trembling hands to guide the skeins. A dull stupefaction, a mortal inertia, seems to have fallen upon Marie, chaining all her faculties in a lethargy that settles more and more heavily upon her. It is with a pitiful substitute for her habitual cheery welcome that she greets several women of the hamlet, who, hearing of the

disturbance in the home of the Vallys, have come to offer service,—and perhaps, to hear a little news, for as yet Dame Rumor has given them but vague information. Seeing the letter that lies upon the window-seat, one aged crone reads aloud the brief announcement therein. A couple of dames passing outside, are attracted by the clamor; seeing this, a few young wives, who are drawing water from the Vally well, come also near the threshold; beholding their action from afar, some market folk from the highroad pause a moment irresolutely, and now, overcome with curiosity, turn into the Vallys' vineyard. Reaching the house just in time to hear the contents of Louis' letter, the foremost a buxom dame of forty summers, whose lad is the scapegoat of the village, elbows her way through the assembled peasants, and confronts the bewildered Marie Vally. "Did I not tell you, Marie, that lad of yours was no better than the rest of us—for all he must go to the great seminary and wear a priest's cassock while his betters are left vine pruning. Now, there's my Alphonse, who has a bad name in the town because he likes his joke a bit; but I'll warrant you Louis has done

the worse and been expelled;—and serve you right." "Yes, serve you *right*, Marie Vally, serve you right, I say;" interrupted old Mother Brousard whose big gander was outpriced by Marie's in the market town; "and don't the holy Bible say as much? Don't the holy Bible tell you that pride must have a fall, and folks that sit in the first place must go down to the last?" "Bien! and you're speaking truth, Mere Brousard, ain't it been nigh on one hundred years since a lad of Lavaudieu was priested, and did you think, Marie, that your Louis would be the next? Seems like the Vallys are mighty high minded of late, seeing that none of their neighbors are fit for their company." A slight titter goes round the group as Mere Gabriel makes this last invective; all the village folk know of the tiff between the two women, since Marie's quilt took the prize over Gabriel's at the fair. But the diversion is but momentary, and the villagers return with renewed zest to their prey. "We told you, Marie Vally, when Louis came home with his college airs last Whitsuntide, that the boy would never be a priest; and Louis knew it in his heart; and now he's done a wrong

and turned his back and run!" "Aye," chimed in the group, in every tone from the shrill voice of Mere Brousard to the rasping tones of Mere Gabriel. Standing closely by the side of the half dazed Marie, Marguerite presses her mother's hand convulsively; a fiery indignation gathering in her eyes. She makes one impatient step toward the villagers, and her lips are half open to reply. Before the girl can speak, however, Marie Vally, roused from her semi-lethargy, her whole frame quivering with righteous indignation, puts the girl firmly and somewhat roughly aside. Her countenance has grown somewhat paler, her eyes blaze with outraged pride:—"Run away, did you say, neighbor Julie, and thou, Mother Gabriel, and all of you gaping folk;—didst you dare to say my Louis has run away?" Instinctively, the peasant group falls back, cowed by the majesty of the mother's wrath. Mere Brousard edges slightly toward the door, and Mere Gabriel slides dexterously behind the form of her buxom neighbor. Seeing their movements, a slightly contemptuous curl trembles upon the lips of Marie Vally, changing in some measure, the nature of her re-

proaches. "Cowards! you are cowards, all of you, and not worth my words; nevertheless, I tell ze that Louis Vally shall be a priest of God, and that all of you will be glad to kiss the hem of his cassock. As for you, Julie Brousard,—" but the routed Julie has given the slip, and is making the best of her hobble to the highroad. By the time Marie Vally has finished her hot retort, not a villager remains within the domicile. Without, only one aged peasant ambles down the vineyard, as Simon Vally, attracted by the noise of the village folk, approaches his threshold, with a great fear tearing at his heart, a fear that, for the nonce, obscures the memory of his unhappy son—what if Marie, the wife of his youth, has been taken, what if the blow has been too much for the mother heart? Almost dreading to cross his door-step Simon Vally pauses an instant, half unconsciously, in the field; as he does so the far off murmur of the departing villagers is borne to him; and crippled Alphonse accosts him brusquely;—something like a sneer on his withered face, and an ugly taunt in his accents;—"Soho! soho! good Monsieur Vally, you have lost both your money and your lad."

And with a malicious chuckle, the hunchback disappears, like a modern Caliban, into the forest. Without deigning to reply, Simon Vally lifts his eyes to the virgin blue of the heavens; tall pillars of cloud afire with noon, stand out in the ether, like the portal to the tabernacle of the Most High. Filled with the majesty and power of the day, the vine grower murmurs half aloud;—"*Fiat voluntas tua.*"

Within the cottage, conflicting emotions sweep over the spirit of Marie Vally. Stern indignation at the apparent ingratitude of their son succeeds her haughty resentment of the torments of the villagers; then, as a white-winged dove, descending amid passion's harpies, the pure spirit of maternal love flutters softly down and nestles within her heaving bosom, bringing a holy peace on its wings.

As Simon enters, the indignant Marguerite endeavors to explain to her father, the events of the morning,—the rencontre with the villagers. But a comprehensive glance has passed between husband and wife,—one of those looks in which soul touches soul,—with a sign, Simon motions his daughter to be silent; and in silence, once

more presses his wife to his bosom. "Fiat volunta tua," Simon murmurs once again, so softly that even Marguerite cannot hear, and between the blessed words, stream their mingled tears.

Down in the little hamlet of Lavaudieu, the village folk, released from the restraining presence of Marie Vally, give free reign to the jest, the mocking sympathy aroused in the early morning by the astounding letter of Louis. At the rustic tavern, where certain old codjers had been, erstwhile, targets for the wit of the Vallys' son, the jibe and joke runs high. And when the Sabbath falls, with its accustomed beauty upon the little Church of St. Andrew's, nodding, gesticulating groups, linger longer than their wont among the peaceful graves. All during the good curé's sermon, which was on "*Le Bon Charite*," Mere Brousard, Mere Gabriel, and pretty Mere Fifine stirred uneasily in their places for very restlessness and longing to meet and discuss the latest news from the Vallys. As Simon walked bravely from the church after Mass, between the lines of peering villagers, his heart was keenly sensible of the omitted greetings, of a slight shrinking of the peasant folk from him, the in-

voluntary but universal movement of humanity away from failure, from sorrow, from misfortune, in its Protean forms. It is the systole and diastole of the social order. Grieved by the ill concealed malice of the villagers, the gentle curé issues from the sacristy, and stands in the midst of the gossiping peasants—a veritable Father Felician. "My children," something unusual in the pastor's voice arrests their attention; "My children, you have worshiped God with your lips, but your hearts were far from Him. The lad whom you slander was the child of my own heart. I say to you that all is yet well with Louis Vally, the day will come when he will stand in the sanctuary—perchance before your altar within. I entreat you to withhold your judgment until further news, and to do in all things to the lad as you would have done unto yourselves."

In the great necropolis of life, in the crowded cities, the thoroughfares of humanity, the mocking voice of the people is uplifted as in the little churchyard of Lavaudieu. Standing upon the dead of countless generations, standing upon the tombs of material prosperity, upon the

mouldering mausoleums of human pride and power, the querulous, discordant voice chants its wild hosannas at the triumph of some illusion, and shrieks its Bacchic pæans at the seeming death of the Eternal and the True. It is the battle-cry of the strong arch-fiend: "Down with the Right and the Real! honor and glory and triumph to Shadows and to Sin!" but the invincible Michaels of the Truth stand waiting for the victory.

Always the life apart is the life misunderstood by others. Always the man apart is the man decried and libelled by his contemporaries. And the bloodthirsty generations, ever armed with stone, stand waiting for the Elishas and the Stephens of the race; and kindle the torture fire when Savonarola passes by. It is the Kismet of prophet and poet; of philosopher and saint; it is the history of those secluded orders in the Catholic Church whose calling leads them unto the Tabors, the Gethsemanes and the Deserts of human life. Priest and religious, Bishop and nun, are not abhorred or satisfied lives that seek refuge, or that ask for consolation; but simply lives led *apart*, lives called into the inner

sanctuaries of thought and work; lives of teacher and seer; of scientist and metaphysician. While communities that toil as one individual, toward some essential good, toward the higher levels of spiritual and intellectual life, the amelioration of human need in all its Protean forms. The meaning of the religious community is the principle of operation along spiritual, intellectual and ethical lines; the supreme spirit of moral social philosophy that has been for generations, the lever of human society.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE SEAL OF MELCHISEDEK

As the astronomer upon his lonely watch-tower, is rapt in silent contemplation,—his faculties absorbed, his senses unconscious of their material surroundings, until the looked-for star bursts upon his fascinated vision; so on the holy turret of spiritual exaltation, the soul of our Levite keeps ceaseless vigil, his being penetrated by deep and awful expectations of the tremendous hour when the golden paten shall shine before him, and the mighty words shall thrill his senses;—"Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedek."

Around the young subdeacon the tides of a new and alien life are sweeping; but in the high solitude of his spirit is heard no sound of their flowing and, except for the simple preparation necessary for his ordination, the son of Lavaudieu pays little heed to his environments. With the simplicity of heart to which all things have been

promised in the "Sermon on the Mount," Louis Vally, accompanied by M. Vigue, a young Levite attached to the cathedral, was wont to go in these dream-like days before his ordination, to the school of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart, at Devereaux Hall. There, seated upon the benches with the little urchins of the first reader class, the grown up students would con the monosyllables of the English language with an avidity and lack of self-consciousness that taught their little schoolmates nobler lessons than any in the text-book. The great things of life lie so close beside the simple ones, or rather should it be said, great things are ever simple by their nature. An exalted life is like a diamond,—capable of reflecting all the hues of its environment, but remaining always pure and clear. But the period allotted to the study of the classical pupils at Devereaux was too brief for genuine progress in the tongue of the Anglo-Saxon. Every dawn and sunset brought the supreme day nearer; and our Levites dwelt in its shadows as in a sacred cloister. The order of subdeacon received at Le Puy, has already marked them men apart; and on the twentieth of December, 1868, a solemn

and quiet ceremony makes the young exiles, deacons of the Church, successors of those strong ones upon whom the Apostles laid hands and anointed unto martyrdom. And, after the power of deaconship had descended upon them, there came a sweet and gracious time,—a time when the Spirit brooded over them; a season of inspiration and of profound significance. At the core of the ethics of the human mind, having its origin and necessity in the fundamental need of the nature of man, may be read the philosophy of the spiritual meditation, or communion prescribed by Roman Catholic law for those about to enter her priesthood, or to take any step of unusual import. No practice of a merely ascetic nature is this: but an obligation in accordance with the dictates of the profoundest psychology. In the evenings of Paradise, Adam walked with God, Abraham communed with Jehovah before every momentous act of his life,—before striking his tent upon the plain of Haran, before the crucial test with Isaac. Isaiah and the Man of Uz made solitary meditations; John dwelt in the wilderness before his life of ministry: and the Supreme Philosopher gathered in His high com-

munions with the Father amid the solitude of the desert, the strength that has made strong the spiritual sinews of the universe. And from the time when Moses sought the mountain, and Buddha Gautama, the wilderness; to the present day solitary meditations of Edison and Marconi, the saint, seer, and scientist of every generation have drawn their spiritual and mental virility from silence and seclusion. No prophet sees a vision, no great work is conceived, no mighty scheme solved by poet or politician, but in the still retreats of uninterrupted meditation. Retreat! well is the name bestowed. Retreat into the fastnesses of the spirit; retreat into the sanctum of the mind,—the Patmos of the heart; retreat from the false to the true; from shadows unto the light; from Jerusalem to Tabor. The twenty-first of December, the day of days, dawns with regal pomp of rose and gold. The frost has laid her white kiss upon all things, as though in pure preparation for the glorious ceremony, and the atmosphere sparkles with myriad crystals like a finely woven web of glass. To the young Levites, and especially to Louis Vally, an electric thrill seems to tingle through all things, sending

a fine exhilaration through brain and heart and sinew, charging the eager spirit with keen enthusiasm caught from the seventh Heaven. Restlessness, trepidation, intense longing, and nervous anticipation have consumed the peasant Lavaudieu for many days; but now that the supreme moment draws nigh, the tremendous crisis approaches, a calm out of the Great Spirit begins to gather around his soul, all great emotions are silent; supreme strength is still; the deep waters of nature and of spirit do not ripple;—the strength of the seraph and the sleeping sea, of birth and death, of exceeding joy and of deep woe, is silent. And so, with steady tread upon this, the morning of his ordination, when St. Mary's Cathedral is robed in a garment of light, Louis Vally takes the solemn steps that transport him from the court of the Levite into the Holy of Holies. No tremor passes over his hands as he places them in those of the noble prelate,—because of whose plea he has left his far-off native land—and vows unquestioning obedience to his will. Slowly, the tremendous rite moves on. A mystical moment comes, when Bishop, clergy and congregation,—aye, even the earth

itself—seem to vanish from the sight of the Vallys' son, and the lights upon the altar to mingle and merge into the light upon the sea of glass. The Heavens seem to open and a wondrous vision to unveil unto his spirit. Hark!—a burst of harmony! is it the choir's glad hosannas, or does an earth-caught echo of the sevenfold angel chorus mingle with the Church's alleluias?

If amid the uncreated bliss that beats upon the foundations of the Throne, a single sinner doing penance, a single sigh of some returning wanderer, creates new thrills of ecstasy, and lends a gladder note to the jubilate of the blest; what waves of rapture roll through Heaven when a son of Adam puts on the armor of Christ, a creature of the dust the panoply of the Trinity, a human soul the order and mystic powers of the priesthood! Gaze upon the scene, ye seraphim; let the hot flames of your rapture leap still higher. Consider this spectacle, ye strong archangels; now does your strength seem weakness in comparison with the strength given unto the earth child, to take such a step. Gaze on this ceremony, ye Choirs, and Thrones, and Principalities, and Powers; now does the blaze

of this man's predilection, dim the glory of your mighty predilection. Let all Prophets, all Martyrs, and the countless armies of white-robed saints and virgins be still for very wonder; let all the heavenly instruments, the royal harps, be silent in the presence of such glory, such mystery, such majesty as this. And from the heart of silence, from the throne of the Father, comes a voice; let all spirits hear:—"*Behold, before the earth was made, have I chosen Him.*" Softly, by the trembling voice of the Bishop, by the solemn responses of the assisting priests, by the exultant praises of the cathedral choir, our Levite is restored to consciousness of the wonderful rite. The majestic ceremony proceeds; the Chalice of Salvation is placed in the hands of Louis Vally. A strong, sweet love surges over his heart, beats like great waves upon his spirit; but,—for one inscrutable instant, at the zenith of the soul's transfiguration, the son of the human feels his heritage of frailty, and the Exile's heart claims its own! During a brief, terrible moment, a consciousness of isolation, a yearning for home, steeps his soul in agony. A swift vision of the cottage at Lavaudieu, of the dear ones by its fire-

side, the hearts he is abandoning forever, and abandoning beneath a shadow, the shadow of apparent ingratitude, of seeming neglect—sweeps over him. For a lightning-like span of time, the Levite becomes the shepherd once more; the old, joyous days in Ardèche, the emerald pastures, the white flock upon the hills, rise like a mirage upon his vision. It is the death-struggle of self, the expiring sob of egoism. Measured by human time, the period of his anguish has been imperceptibly brief; none have dreamed of his travail; no pause has been made in the sacred rite; yet the spirit of Louis Vally has won a supreme victory, and arises, phœnix-like, from the flame of its trial, free with the perfect freedom born only of the fire. Again the candidate is absorbed in the sublime ceremony, a slight pallor whitens his brow, but the heart of the youth has become the heart of the priest, the priest forever, according to the order of Melchisedek. The climax of emotion in the heart of the Vallys' son is passed; the zenith of the glorious ceremony has been reached, and now the rite flows calmly on toward its conclusion. Another organ burst of triumph and—all is over. The choir's loud pæan

follows the worshipers from the blazing cathedral to the December streets:—

> "Holy God we praise Thy name
> Lord of all, we bow before Thee;
> Our on earth Thy sceptre claim,
> All in Heaven above adore Thee.
> Infinite Thy vast domain,
> Everlasting is Thy name."

Outside the walls of St. Mary's, the daily life of the little town goes on as usual. The subdued congregation pass slowly into the streets, but the tear-filled eyes are soon dried by the inexorable demands of the routine of existence. They have stood on Tabor, but they dwell in Jerusalem, and the mart and the highways will swallow them once more. But the soul of Louis Vally, borne by the mighty hand of Ordination up the Holy Mountain, stands upon the height face to face with the Vision ever more. Almost unconsciously, the new made priest pauses an instant in the sacristy, as he does so, a voice as from a great distance is borne unto him:—"Father, give me your blessing." With a start, Louis Vally becomes conscious of his surroundings. "Father!" how dear the word, how sacred the title

for which he has longed, for which he has renounced all others, for which he has left home and dear ones and country, for which he has abandoned all save sacrifice! But the thrill of pleasure is soon succeeded by one of bewilderment, and the hot blood leaps from the heart of the son of the Vallys and dyes his cheek and neck and brow, for kneeling before him is the venerable Bishop of Natchez. The young priest stretches out his hands to raise him but the prelate waves them aside.

"Nay, your Lordship," the voice of Louis Vally is broken with embarrassment, "I am not worthy; rather should I ask *your* blessing." But with gentle determination Monseigneur Elder persists in his request, bowing his head before the reluctant priest. With reverence akin to awe, Louis Vally raises his trembling hands; but—struggle as he will for self-control, he cannot, for very reverence, touch the beloved head before him. The beautiful words of the benediction fall brokenly from his lips; the overwrought nerves give way; the "*Benedicat te*" is merged into a sob. Lower and lower droops the young head, until the newly consecrated brow touches

the brow of many consecrations, and,—silence falls between their spirits. Next morning, in the solemn half light of the winter dawn, Louis Vally utters the mighty words of his first Mass, amid a stillness that,—to the awestruck spirit of the young celebrant, seemed to extend from eternity to eternity, and to blot out all things save the mystical humanity, physical presence of the First Born of the Universe. Kings there are in the alien world, beyond the cathedral, whose nod sends the human brother to his death. Statesmen there are, whose dicta hurl kings from thrones and raise up princes from the dust; but president or czar, emperor or king, may not speak such words as these to which our simple Ardèche peasant gave utterance in that dawn hour. Such thoughts as these flashed with meteor like rapidity through the awe-filled mind of the newly anointed. Truly, the lowly has been exalted, the servant has become the master, the voice that erstwhile led the white flock upon the Ardèche meadows, now speaks its mandate to the Lord of Lords!

Soon, the Sabbath-day will dawn again; and among the newly ordained priests there is much

speculation as to which of their number will be selected to sing the High Mass in St. Mary's Cathedral. The question is decided by Monseigneur Elder, who enters the room where the young men are assembled, and announces in his genial way:—"Father Vally, the last in the order of the alphabet shall be the first; you will chant High Mass to-morrow."

Memories of the beautiful voice that had sanctified and glorified those wonderful nights at sea, remain in the heart of the Mississippi Bishop; and before the son of his soul should depart for his eastern mission, his voice must be heard in the sanctuary of St. Mary's. Here, then, is another test of the young Vally, but the son of Simon meets it bravely. During the early parts of the service, nervousness threatens to master him; but as the Sacrifice approaches, and the harmonies deepen, all his self-consciousness is merged within them, and lifted upon the glorious wings of melody, his spirit stands before its King. The youth of Lavaudieu, the neotype, the newly ordained, has been annihilated and in his place is the mediator, the Aaron, the intercessor,

the seer. His soul is lost in unfathomed seas of glory, and echoes of uncreated harmony mingle with the rhapsody of the Preface. Intense silence reigns throughout the church, as the magnificent chant rolls on, gathering the spirit of the worshipers upon its waves and plunging them into depths of melody. The Spirit of Prayer descends into the midst of the congregation, fills sanctuary and nave with her presence, gathers every heart in a close embrace. Unfurling her holy wings, she broods above the people. At the *Ite missa est* the worshipers are still conscious of her influence; the benediction of music lingers like a halo round their souls, and every joy filled spirit chants with the Royal Minstrel:—"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to enquire in His temple." No spirit that dwells in the mansions of the King stands so near the Throne as the sacred Spirit of Music; her whisper is the key-note of creation; and down the ages of the Christian era the Roman Catholic Church has led the Spirit through the world, to exalt and

purify the nations, and has been the supreme Source from which has flowed the master harmonies of the race. Music is ordained priestess of her sacrifice; and from her Gregorian chant the great reformer Palestrina to the eagle flights of Mozart, or Mendelssohn, of Beethoven or Gluck, of Haydn or Don Perosi, the supreme artists of nigh two thousand years have drawn their inspirations from the Mass. In the afternoon of the Sabbath consecrated by the solemnization of his first High Mass, when the ruby light of the afterglow streams like a banner across the path of the Exile, Louis Vally bids another farewell to Monseigneur Elder and to the comrades of his youth, now, Father Chevalier and Father de Mourenger. This time another dear, if new found friend must be left behind,—one whose uplifting influence has been a potent factor in the evolution of the character of the Vallys' son—namely, M. Vigue of St. Mary's Cathedral. The heart of the young Vally is a *Miserere* as he sets forth for the little mission at Meridian. Sweet voices of the Invisible sing no longer to his spirit; only beneath the blood red banner in the west, a mournful wind arises from

the Mississippi. And the voice of his spirit exclaims:—"My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

## CHAPTER X

### GETHSEMANE

"My sea-chest cannot be found, Bishop, and the boat leaves in forty minutes!" exclaims the agitated voice of Louis Vally, as he rushes rather unceremoniously into the library of the prelate. A smile, half sorrowful, half humorous, creeps over the countenance of Monseigneur Elder, as he answers with twinkling eye, but serious tone:— "Never mind, my son, you will have no place to put it." A responsive smile leaps to the face of the young priest as his keen sense of humor grasps the situation. It is soon succeeded, however, by an expression of deep melancholy, as the mournful significance of the words is realized by mind and heart. No place for his simple possessions, the meagre outfit that itself had seemed inadequate for his needs! No resting-place for the wardrobe, no resting-place for the man! And for the first time the full significance of the missionary life is born within his spirit.

It is as though a great flash-light had been turned upon him. A slight return of the old terror seems about to seize him, but, like a ministering angel, comes the virile thought, "This is, indeed, the life of the Master, the fate of the supreme Missionary of the world." Truly, "the foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests," but the followers of the Son of Man, like their Leader, have frequently, no place to lay their heads. Scarcely a moment passes while these stormy, conflicting emotions sweep through the soul of the missionary; but an hour later, when the young soldier of the Light paces the deck of the Mississippi steamer, a new firmness is in his tread, a new, and almost martial dignity in his carriage. The soldier has heard the trumpet call, and will go forth to death or victory; it may be to victory *through* death.

The fading sunset lights, like retreating spirits, still move over the waters of the great river, as the packet glides between the hoary shores, making graceful headway for the town of Vicksburg, where our traveler will reach the nearest railway to the little station, "Sahwache," now the prosperous town of Meridian. The majestic

hills and wooded lowlands of Mississippi—in the early thirties—lifted their virgin forests, and held their immemorial solitudes unviolated, except at long intervals, by the iron fetters and fiery breath of railroad and locomotive. And the traveler from point to point in the state was, at that period, forced to make great *detours* in order to obtain the means of transportation to his destination.

Again, while the heavily-freighted packet moves slowly up-stream, Louis Vally is brought face to face with a mighty monument, a new and wonderful aspect of that nature to which, in all times and places, his spirit gives a responsive thrill. To the youth accustomed to the tiny streamlets of the French provinces, to the silver Saone, the tiny Dore, and later to the unmajestic and polluted Seine, the voyage upon the great "Father of Waters" brings a revelation of the Creator and His mighty ways, scarcely less affecting than the message of the sea.

Along the solemn shores, the funeral cortège of the moss-draped forests seems to glide in endless succession. From the jagged clefts of the hills, and the barren, storm-bared summits, skele-

ton-like trees stretch forth their sinister arms like wraiths of the dark and daring race whose war-whoop rang along its waters from Lake Itasca to the Gulf. Relentless, resistless, all-compelling, the terrible river unrolls its sullen length, levelling the immemorial hills, and building the reedy isles like a blind Titan in his sport. The majesty, the desolation of the Western World,—God's latest gift to the sons of men,—the power and the pity of it—the vast, uninhabited savannas, the beautiful and treacherous swamps—torture the overwrought nerves of the young missionary with an oppression that is almost suffocation. At twilight, a dense fog, the evil spirit of the waters, spreads her guilty wings, entombing land and river in a weird and awful winding sheet. To the unaccustomed eyes of the son of France, a mighty shroud seems to have fallen between the heavens and the earth, and the shrill shriek of the whistle to be the voice of some desolate soul. Gradually, the depression deepened; and it is with a feeling akin to relief, that Louis Vally accepts the kindly invitation of the captain to descend into the cabin: "The malaria is in the air, sir; and foreigners are

ready victims." The malaria!—what is that? He has heard of the ghastly yellow fever that makes corpses of strong men in a few short hours, but its power is intermittent, and men have respite; but the malaria! Here is another and more insidious foe; another demon of sickness waiting to clutch the eager heart of the Christian soldier, and strangle its holy energies. Here is an enemy with which the exile is powerless to contend. Not the heroic sacrifice, the swift death of the yellow fever, then—heaven and the palm branch; but the slow torture when the enfeebled frame and the paralyzed will drag on their ghastly life from month to month, sometimes from year to year. That is a condition the ardent spirit of the son of Lavaudieu has not considered; and the horror of it seizes upon his young frame sending a strong shudder through all his members, as though the ghastly fever in reality preyed upon his vitals. Outside, the pallid, fog-muffled night comes down. Within him, a deeper night is gathering. Pressing his hand upon his breast, to still the rapid beating of his heart, his touch comes in contact with a bulky envelope, and he is reminded of the letter

with the foreign postmark that was handed him in the morning; it was from Lavaudieu, and he could not bear to read it until he could find some time and place of uninterrupted solitude. Disengaging himself as soon as possible, from the bluff, but kindly converse of the captain, Louis Vally seeks his cabin, and, seating himself upon the little berth, eagerly scans the familiar handwriting. It is from the mother, the good Marie. The eyes of the young priest travel hungrily over the lines; the Bishop's message must have reached Lavaudieu before their letter was written; surely, *les bons parents* must have known by that time that he was a priest. All the disappointment, the sorrow, is at an end, and words of love and praise are contained within their message;—words of love for which he craves because he is a son, and more the son because the priest; words of commendation for which he longs, because he is a man full of the vigor and hope and eagerness of young manhood. But, as though in mockery, the startling shriek of the fog-whistle, like fiendish laughter, falls harshly upon his strained senses now in sudden, rude reaction; for written many times in the well-

beloved characters of *Mere Marie*, come the words of disappointment, of condemnation, almost of denunciation! No; the Bishop's letter has not reached them: they still believe him truant; even evil; a serpent that has stung the hand that nourished it;—that worst and basest of creatures, a graceless and ungrateful son. "*Mon Dieu!*" the sharp cry rings out upon the gloom, startling the night guards. "*Mon Dieu!*" The young missionary has entered his Gethsemane. It is the ultimate cry of the spirit for aid, the supreme abandonment of heart and of mind. Almost stifling beneath the strong agony of his emotions, he throws open the little door that leads on deck. The leaden fog draws its winding sheet about him. Not a star can struggle through the white shroud of its weaving; the strongest planet is powerless, and the moon sheds only a sepulchral luminance. "*Mon Dieu!*" but this time in calmer tones; now,—so low, the words are scarcely whispered, "Not my will, but Thine be done." And out of the gloom of night and of spirit, bright angels come and minister unto him, the beautiful kindred angels of Peace and of Resignation. With a wordless

prayer, the exile casts himself upon the little cot in his stateroom. Night has waned during his anguish, and when Louis Vally, awaking from a brief, dreamless sleep, looks out over the river once more, dawn is lifting her triumphant banners in the East, and the fog, like an iridescent bridal veil, is floating back from the virgin forehead of the day. Vicksburg, upon her undulating hills, rises mirage-like beneath the shimmering vapors, and resembles a great river bird, spreading her white wings for flight. At the wharf, the missionary leaves the packet, and seeks the presbytery and the kindly hospitality of Rev. Francis Xavier Leray. A few hours later Louis Vally finds himself aboard the "Alabama and Vicksburg" train, starting on the (then) nine hours' journey to Meridian. Further and further into the land of Dixie, while mocking-birds sing, and magnolias lift their white chalices above the blood-stained sod, penetrates the soldier of Light and Peace. Blackened, scarred, and devastated, the country bares its fetid wounds before him. In the damp, close atmosphere of a sullen December day, the train seems to move through a column of smoke—so

closely hangs the heavy breath of the locomotive about the coaches. A slight shiver passes over Louis Vally as the train speeds through the rank marshes, and the shrill cries of the water-fowl proclaim the home of the dread malaria of which the captain of the packet had graphically warned him.

A cheerless, sombre night is closing gloomily in, as the train draws up into the little station-house at Meridian. Dreary as the chill December evening is the reeking, dimly lighted depot, set like the cabin of a frontiersman by the edge of a forest of sombre pines. Tall trees loom black and sinister in the sullen night, like evil spectres plotting the woe of the little hamlet that straggles westward, lifting its feeble lights at wide intervals upon the gloom. A harsh shriek from the engine and the train, like a retreating monster, is swallowed up by the night; and Louis Vally stands alone in the semi-darkness, straining his vision to see Rev. J. B. Mouton, whom he expects to meet him. Slowly, the little crowd of citizens that had gathered on the station platform, dissolve like a shadow. But a few loitering officials remain. These also,

one by one, vanish into the outer darkness, and the young missionary stands upon the dank ground, as solitary as though he were many miles from human habitation. The heart of Louis Vally becomes like lead within his bosom. The heavy moments pass, and still no one appears to meet him, or to offer assistance. The chill of the night creeps into vein and sinew. With something like a shudder, he seats himself upon the reeking platform, leaning his arms listlessly upon the rude little trunk that contains his scanty outfit. Uncertain what to do, or where to direct his steps, the rattle of dray wheels jolting over the uneven land, and the rude patois of the negro driver, brings him swiftly to his feet; here, at last, must be the means of transportation.

By frantic gesticulation, and vociferation in broken French, the sable driver is induced to stop his shackly team. "Laws-a-massy, marster," ejaculates the dumbfounded African, "whut you doin' a settin' dar, a' dis here hour? Nex' train ain't due 'fo' midnight." Almost executing a somersault in his grotesque efforts to make known his dilemma, and finding it im-

possible to convey a glimmer of his desires into the darky's pate by means of words and mother French, the young missionary resorts to action, and grasping his little trunk, flings it upon the dray, then leaps nimbly beside the driver. For the first time, a dim comprehension of his meaning seems to dawn upon the African.

Turning with something like indignation to the now triumphant missionary, he exclaims, in adulterated Congo:—"Dis vayhecle ain't no car'age for white fokes to rid' on; yo' will please to get down, sah." But Louis Vally only braces himself the firmer against his baggage, gazing with affected oblivion into the distance. Beholding the attitude of his would-be passenger, the darky folds his ebony arms with superb indifference and calmly seats himself upon the dusky platform, first loosing, with dextrous hand, the dilapidated mule from the harness. "Dar now; I'se a nigger, is I? Yankee men dun set nigger free; 'Lijah Moses Washington Smith take no passengers on dis here dray." Stolidly, as though by his cabinet fireside, the darky draws out his cob and begins to smoke. Realizing the hopelessness of the situation, the

crestfallen missionary descends ruefully from his perch. As he does so, 'Lijah Moses reharnesses his steed, and, having conquered in the skirmish, remarks with a slight attempt at conciliation: "Dar now; yo' can leave yer trunk, marster, an' I'll tote it whar yo' gwine —— Whar *is* yo' gwine?" "Whar" indeed! Like a flash of inspiration, the parting suggestion of the Bishop to hunt up Mr. J. J. Shannon, in case of emergency, flashes upon Louis Vally:—to Mr. Shannon's, then, he will go at once. With strenuous repetitions, during which the name undergoes every phase of distortion, 'Lijah Moses *is* made to comprehend. "Law!" the voice of the prophet's namesake is saturated with supreme disgust, "Yo' means Marse Shannon! 'Cose I knows Marse Shannon; don't eberybody know Marse Shannon? And ain't I seed him ebery bressed day sence I was knee high to a goslin? Just come along, marster; yo' can keep in sight ob de dray." Damp, indignant, utterly worn out from the unaccustomed confinement of the train, thoroughly saturated with the penetrating cold, and feeling sharp pangs of hunger, from his fast since leaving Vicksburg, the dis-

heartened missionary tramps along the inexorable road, and after a pilgrimage through what seems an interminable forest of pine, and an endless carpet of burrs, made doubly treacherous by the thin ice and perforated by slough and hollow, the grotesque party, draggled, limp, and well-nigh frozen, reaches the main street of the town and makes its tortuous way to the residence of Colonel Shannon. The cheery glow of lamp and fire within the comfortable manse shines like the lights of the new Jerusalem to the exhausted missionary. Briefly dismissing his sable guide, Louis Vally presents himself to the kindly master of the house, and receives from him a welcome that will ring within his heart to the end of his earthly life.

Within the roomy home, Colonel Shannon then the editor of the *Mercury*, the village journal, gave hospitality to his staff of clever reporters. Refreshed with the generous supper of their host, the jovial penmen hailed with avidity, the advent of this, to them, curious specimen of French humanity ; and to the lips of the witty copy-makers, leaped many a keen but kindly joke at the missionary's expense. To the son of

Lavaudieu, also, the rollicking pressmen seemed rare mammals from the big Zoo of humanity. Great men and learned, he had known, but never men of such sharp wit and clever repartee. Often, in sheer confusion at their good-natured shafts, the young missionary hastily retired to his own apartment, or sought the sweet companionship of a little son of the house with whom he would wander through the quaint old garden and, asking the term (English) for fruit and flower, fill the little man with wonder, that his, Louis Vally's, French mamma could have been so negligent, failing, as she did, to teach her boy the name of anything! But we digress:—

Several days of waiting amid the genial Shannon family, pass by, and, one night, about the time of the evening meal, bluff, cheery, and much bespattered from a hard missionary journey in the December woods, Rev. John Baptiste Mouton enters the cosy dining-room. The heart of Louis Vally leaps into his throat. Here, at last, is one to whom he can look for sympathy and guidance; the father for whom he has yearned, a fellow countryman and exile, a coworker in the alien fields that stretch before him. With warm

impetuosity, the young missionary rushes forward to greet the elder priest, his soul upon his lips; but something in the cool critical glance of Father Mouton arrests him. Flicking the mud nonchalantly from his missionary valise, while his piercing eye travels rapidly over the person of his young assistant, the elder priest chillingly remarks:—

"Hem!—so *you* are Louis Vally." "Yes;" the voice of the latter sounds strained and far off in his own ears; if all the snows of Mont Blanc had descended upon his spirit, it could not have been more completely frozen within him. "This then," seemed to whisper a discordant voice within him, "is the end of it all; all the waiting, the yearning, for one who would speak the dear familiar tongue, a comrade whose spirit would respond to his spirit, whose heart would answer to his heart. The old, terrible depression surges over him;—the missionary stands alone with his fate.

After his keen surveillance, that seemed endless to the heavy heart of Louis Vally, Father Mouton speaks for the second time:—"Well, eat your supper; I'll see you afterward."

Resuming his place at the table, the young Vally, almost crushed with disappointment, but nerving himself to preserve a manly dignity, forces himself to partake of the food before him; but, because of the tumultuous condition of his mind, every morsel inflicts a deadly nausea. As the trying meal draws to an end, Father Mouton beckons the young man to follow him, and, reluctantly, Louis Vally enters the private apartment of the veteran missionary. Scarcely is the door closed behind them, when, to the extreme amazement of the younger priest, the elder opens wide his arms, after the tender manner of the French, and clasps his trembling assistant close to his heart. "It was to try you, my son, and to know your metal," says Father Mouton, when his deep emotion allows him to speak. "You are made of the right stuff, and you will never want a friend while John Baptiste Mouton is alive."

And he never did; in all the stern sweet years that followed, the friendship of that noble priest proved a light, an inspiration, and a guidance to the son of Lavaudieu.

Next morning, in the gray of the December

dawn, Louis Vally entered, for the first time, the little church that then constituted, in Meridian, the sole abode of the King of Kings. In the small, bare building, burdened with heavy debt, no shining vestment, no altar service awaited the celebrant. When one of the Lord's anointed would fain offer the sacrifice of Melchisedek, he must be supplied with sacred vessels, etc., from the homely contents of his little missionary valise. Built in 1867, by the heroic efforts of Father James A. Bennett, who was removed to other fields before the completion of the building, the little Meridian church passed to John Baptiste Mouton, who assumed the almost hopeless responsibility of liquidating its debt. As the day advanced, the unintercepted rays of the sun poured relentlessly through the unshuttered windows, and rested upon the bare, whitewashed walls with an almost blinding fervor. Stern, relentless Poverty, drew her harsh outlines upon all things; and from the rude altar, fashioned by the anointed hands of Father Mouton himself, to the crude and comfortless benches that did duty for pews, Want seemed to glare with searching and merciless eye. The dreariness

and pathetic need of the little sanctuary pierced to the quick the soul of the youthful celebrant, the strong and terrible hand of Destitution seemed to clutch his heart, to paralyze his energies, to kill his aspirations. But the emotion was but momentary; swiftly as it came the insidious temptation passed. And as the tremendous Rite moved on to its consummation, and the Royal Guest came out upon the wooden altar, a glory fell upon the homely church, surpassing the transcendent splendors of the Temple on Mount Zion; and, as though a seraph had touched his soul with living fire, the majesty and strength and power of the supreme truth that the Creator needs not the created; spirit needs not the dust; the Word needs not the shadow; was burned with deathless characters upon the intellect of the new made priest.

"Be still, and know that I am God." Chanted by the voices of the Invisible, the profound mandate seemed to fill the little building. Raising his hands to bless the people, the eyes of the young missionary rested for the first time upon the little band, some forty earnest worshipers, who then represented the Roman Catholic

congregation in Meridian. Despite the sharp cold of the early morning, those men and women had assembled from the village and its suburbs, for the great Sacrifice, could, at that time, be offered only at intervals. And in the brief moment of that benediction, the heart of Louis Vally went out to the people, who in future years, became *his* people indeed; heart of his heart, flesh of his flesh, through sorrow and suffering, through struggle and privation, through toil and trial, through life, and in death.

A few days later, when Father Mouton leaves him, going forth to pursue his missionary labors, Louis Vally becomes an inmate of the home of Mr. Bernard Daly, one of Meridian's most respected citizens.

There, under the kindly tutelage of his generous host, the young Frenchman attained his first knowledge of the English language. Previous to his departure, Rev. John Baptiste Mouton placed in the hands of his new assistant a map of the missions in old Mississippi that were to be his (Louis Vally's) especial charge. And as the sun of the old year sets in a cloud of crimson glory, the young missionary stands face to

face with his life-work, alone, at last, with his future and his God.

Deep lines of sombre purple are drawn across the West,—sinister bars that shut the glory in; but, radiant and holy and prophetic, the evening star comes out upon the East.

## CHAPTER XI

### VIA CRUCIS

Across the great region of East Mississippi, in the year 1869, the forest primeval marshaled its solemn armies of imperial oaks and noble pines, its serried ranks broken anon, by marsh and prairie, and,—at wide intervals, by the little hamlets whose peaceful smoke ascended amid the clearings, like a Christian's prayer from the uncouth toil and rude environments of daily life. Chubuta, Enterprise, Winchester, Marion, Buccatunna; within the state, and York Station and Greensborough, Alabama, to which by request of Bishop Quinlan, the labors of our missionary were extended, were divided from each other by almost impenetrable woods, and dangerous swamps, which, in many instances, forced the traveler to dismount from his horse and journey on foot for many leagues. The rifle of the trapper and the ax of the pioneer were still at work, molding the virgin life of forest and prairie into

the mature conditions of our twentieth century civilization. In the dense undergrowth of those primeval woods, the wildcat reared her dangerous progeny, and in the seemingly limitless swamps, the moccasin and rattlesnake made their cozy beds beneath the pale canopy of the lilies that, like baleful Circes, lured the hapless pilgrim on to his destruction. Rarely, in those vast and silent solitudes, did a spring of pure and life sustaining water gush from the hidden fountains of the soil, and offer its crystal benediction to the pilgrim; and upon the delusive bayous that threaded the prairies, a thin green slime wove its baleful meshes, and a faint blue vapor arose at nightfall,—the deadly exhalation of the malaria within. By day, for league upon league, no sound reached the ear of the traveler, save the solemn voices of the pines, the calls of the wild birds, and, at intervals, a faint rustle in tangle or cane-brake, and the low, venomous hiss which betokened the presence of the poisonous reptile. By night, from a thousand unseen caverns, the fierce, untamed monarchs of the solitude would issue, and the weird bay of the wolf would fill the dark with a thousand terrors; and

anon—if the weary pilgrim has let his watch-fire grow dim, a pair of glowing eyes would peer through the branches, and the stealthy tread of the unknown foe, sound dull and sinister upon the night. And whether in the wild, free mornings, when the sunlight splintered into a thousand gems against the trembling leafage, and mossy tree trunks, or in the solemn nights, when the mournful presence of the moon transformed the wilderness, lifting the pine crests unto the heavens, dropping a nameless spell upon prairie and marsh-land,—even the Spirit of Solitude kept her holy vigil, and all animate and inanimate nature owned her sovereign queen. Like a great archangel from the flaming altar of the East, robed in fire, and crowned with glory, rose the first sun of the New Year,—when our young missionary, his soul likewise "afire with God," leaves the little village of Meridian to answer a summons in the hamlet of Paulding. Reaching Enterprise by the Mobile and Ohio railroad, a rough wagon was his only means of transportation for the weary miles of uneven country that intervened between Enterprise and his place of destination; and not until the freezing night

had begun to chain all things with her icy fetters, did our dauntless pilgrim reach the little hamlet, and thus complete his first day's journey upon the Royal Way,—in which, with brave heart and unflagging step, he was destined to walk beside the Master.

Without pausing to take some sorely needed refreshment, the son of the Vallys hastens to the bedside of an aged woman, a veritable mother in Israel, whose life flame burns so low that the great central fire of God and of Eternity threaten to engulf it. There, in a lonely cottage on the edge of the hamlet, while the solemn forest keeps silent sentinel, and the majesty of the night, broken only by the fitful candle-light, enfolds and consecrates the lowly place, the new made priest, with the oil of ordination scarcely dry upon his palms, for the first time anoints a fellow being with the blessed unction that,—like a sweet night flower, will make fragrant all the Valley of the Shadow. Thrilling with the consciousness of abounding physical vigor, and the transcendent energies born of contact with the life imparting Sacrament, a great tenderness for the fading form upon the couch, a measureless

pity for the sons of Adam, by Adam doomed to die the death, surges over the young missionary, sweeping away the barriers of his tears; and the brow of the newly anointed priest bends low above the couch, and the youthful head nearly touches the gray one, as the bed becomes the bier, and the Christian spirit awakes into the Light that casts no shadows and that knows no night.

From the death-bed of the venerable woman to the Fount of Living Waters, the son of Lavaudieu passes with swift, but natural transition. An infant is to be baptized, a tiny babe new-born within the hamlet. And between death and life, and life and death, the soul of the missionary vibrates with keen emotion and with kindled understanding, from the death of the body the more abundant life of the spirit; from the death of primal evil, the life of the regenerated soul.

The little church of St. Michael's is very still within;—so still the voice of the Spirit is almost heard, as Louis Vally pours the mystic waters, and, with reverence akin to fear, bends low, and kisses the still moist cheek of the little white-

robed babe. Tiny, weak and helpless this, great, and strong and of wonderful power in that other world, which,—when the firmament shall perish, and the constellations return into the womb of Chaos, will never pass away.

Forgetful of his great fatigue, the young priest walks down the shadowy aisle and kneels before the altar, where the fitful glimmer of the sanctuary lamp drops ruby stains that, to the kindled spirit of the missionary look like the Blood of the Lamb he has so freely poured since his arrival in the village.

"Life and death!" murmurs Louis Vally, "life and death! Life *is* death, and death *is* life; we mistake substance for the shadow; we love the shadow for the substance. Oh! Life of all life, give us life more abundantly; grant, indeed, that in Thee, we may live."

And having thus communed with the Great Presence, the missionary arises, and passes through the dusky sacristy unto the holy silence of the night.

In the long, chill months that follow the first exercise of his functions as missionary in the little hamlet of Paulding, Louis Vally threads, on

horseback, sometimes, but more frequently on foot, the immense areas of forest and morass that checker the territory under his care. Armed with his little missionary valise, and a homely staff, his sole defense against the unknown dangers of the wilderness, the glory of the rising sun rests frequently upon his brow like a visible benediction, and the light of its setting kindles a glory about his tired feet; unrolling a golden path that seems to lead to the mansions of the King, the home and goal of his dauntless spirit, the only resting place his heart can know.

Only at great distances apart, the home of a woodsman shows its trembling light beyond the forest aisles; and many miles of unbroken solitude stretch between the rude log cabins of the hunters upon the borders of the vast prairies. Food and drink are at best uncertain, and the pilgrim must depend for both upon the untoothsome store that can be kept in the tiny commissary of his little wallet. Shelter might, or might not be had; and the missionary must expect none other than the trembling canopy of the trees and the fair star-gemmed coverlid of the night. Upon the moss-covered ridges, the tired body

must snatch its restless sleep; tortured at times beyond endurance by the swarms of gallinipper mosquitoes and tormenting gnats that banished slumber and even put to flight the possibility of repose in a reclining position. After such wakeful and tortured nights, the Roman Catholic missionary would arise at dawn and ill-nourished, and entirely unprotected from the elements, resume his heroic pilgrimage through the woods. Small wonder that youth and health and vigor died all too soon within them, and that many sleep in premature graves beneath the very forest trees that witnessed their long vigils; while others, old men in their prime, are forced to seek the refuge of hospital and seminary, and die the death of enforced and torturing inaction. Returning in the silent night-watches from these painful excursions to the sites of his various missions, Louis Vally, unwilling to arouse the kindly citizens of Meridian, would seek the shelter of the little church; and there, on the hard, bare benches, but in the Royal Presence of the King, snatch the sleep of sheer exhaustion. When remonstrated with by his warm-hearted people, who further insisted that his action was not rev-

erent, hoping thereby to influence him as no personal consideration would have done, he was wont to reply in the touching words of the saintly Bishop, "Even a faithful mastiff is allowed to sleep at the foot of his master."

And so he slept,—the son of Lavaudieu, and loved best to sleep, and so he rests to-day, now that the long night is over, in the shadow of the beloved fane; but we must not anticipate. After a season of weary journeyings, months during which the hand grew thinner that paused to pluck the wayside passion-flower, and pin it on the breast wherein another and more glorious passion-flower was blooming,—the baleful influence of the miasma began to make felt its long defied, but restless power. Slowly but surely, into vein and nerve the poisonous exhalation crept with deadly purpose, benumbing the alert faculties of the missionary and breathing its evil gases about his heart. Gradually, the elasticity vanished from his step, the dauntless energy from his over-taxed frame. Imperceptibly at first, but surely, the length of the day's journey is shortened. Grotesque, feverish dreams haunt the racked brain by night, and sometimes by day, in

transient delirium, the young priest wanders from his path and loses himself in the dense undergrowth of the forest. Anon,—to his inflamed vision, the giant trees take on grotesque and sinister forms, and seem like spirits of evil striving to turn him aside from his life-work. The juniper and grape-vines stretch their mocking arms across his path. The wild bird chorus becomes discordant, and jeer and jibe and taunt are uttered in a thousand never ceasing tones. The noonday sun grows lurid, and the moon takes on a cold, metallic glitter. Every mossy bank attracts him with almost resistless power, and the tall pines whisper: "Lie here, lie here, oh! child of Adam; here is rest and dreams;—better still, oblivion."

With a gesture of physical repulsion, as though thrusting some tangible enemy from him, the missionary struggles on, on through wood and marsh and prairie; on, while every nerve vibrates with the awful tension; on, while the deadly faintness creeps near, and yet nearer to the heart; on, while strength to drag one heavy foot before the other remains in the tormented frame.

But there comes a day when,—somewhere in

the ancient wilderness, the missionary sinks beside a moss-robed tree. The shy squirrels peer curiously at the prostrate form, and a redbird hops confidingly upon his breast. Awaking from a brief oblivion, Louis Vally knows that the struggle can be waged no longer. With a supreme effort he gathers his remaining strength and enters the hamlet of Marion, the lights of which gleam as fireflies on the deepening twilight. Instantly, his course of action is decided upon; and seeking Mr. C. R. Rushing, the kindly vice-president of the Mobile and Ohio for aid, he secures transportation, and takes the first outgoing train for Mobile, without notifying any one of his intention of doing so.

Through the same delirium of fever and the pangs of increasing illness, the heart of Louis Vally is still mindful of his fellow men. Shrinking from giving inconvenience to the friends who would gladly have succored him in his pressing need, he acts in this, as in other great emergencies, promptly and alone.

Upon arriving at Mobile, nearly unconscious, and scarcely able to walk, the son of Lavaudieu presents himself at the "Providence Infirmary,"

then, as now, one of the most noble institutions in the South. A swift expression of sympathy and of pity springs to the face of the Sister of Charity, of whom the missionary asks hospitality. As her experienced eye travels rapidly over the emaciated form, an almost maternal tenderness creeps into her words:

"Sit down, Father, your weakness is very great." And Louis Vally answers:—"I am a poor priest, good Sister, and I ask your charity, for it is likewise great."

One month, during which the ardent soul almost loosed itself from the heavy trammels of the body;—one month, in which, by dream and vision, the tired shepherd trod once more the sunrise pastures of Ardèche, while phantom sheep bells rang, and the good mother's voice was heard, Louis Vally lay oblivious of his surroundings.

But the Master of the Vineyard awakes the laborer; he must arise, go forth and tread the wine-press once more. Slowly, at first imperceptibly, the fever spirits withdraw their veils from the brain of the sufferer. Outside, the snowdrop and the hyacinth are lifting their

maid-white brows to meet the blushing spring. The faint odor of newly turned earth is on the air; the first love note of the mocking-bird, floats sweet and clear through the big windows of the dormitory, open for the first time, this morning. Afar, the sapphire waters of the beautiful bay flash and flow in the virgin light, while a flock of returning birds sails like a cloud athwart the fleckless heavens. And opening, once more, the eyes of spirit and of body, Louis Vally knows that the winter is past,—the spring has come!

The first conscious action of the missionary is to dictate these words to be forwarded over the wires to the Bishop of Mississippi, and to Rev. John Baptiste Mouton:—"Sick—chills and fever—am in Mobile—you will find me at the Providence Infirmary." And the indomitable courage, the matchless decision of character, the strength of heart and will that inspired those lines, so deeply impressed the Right Reverend Prelate, that when his answer came to Louis Vally, the convalescent missionary was appointed pastor of Meridian.

PRIMITIVE CHURCH AND SCHOOL IN MERIDIAN, 1877.

## CHAPTER XII

### LABORARE EST ORARE

BRAVE and glad is the heart of the young pastor, when after the years of yearning and of waiting, he stands at last amid his little flock. The son and heir of the Eternal Patriarch has come into his heritage; the shepherd of Lavaudieu into the great birthright of his spirit. A sublimer mission than that of Moses newly charged with the guidance of Israel's exiled hosts; a nobler responsibility than Josue's, as he marshaled the tribesmen to do battle with the Gabaonites; greater than the power of Aaron as he stood within the Holy of Holies. Over the beautiful meadows of Righteousness, where the golden graces grow like morning streams over the rugged hills of Temptation, where, in cleft and chasm, those same graces shine like fallen stars; over the turbid torrent and the deep ravines of Grief; and up the sun-crowned mountains of Joy and Inspiration; in sunlight and in

storm, in gladness and sorrow, side by side, step by step with his people, the shepherd priest must walk; his life merged into their lives, his heart into their hearts. And coming into his little kingdom, the spirit of Louis Vally goes out at once and without reserve, to the people of his predilection, and the new made priest is about to enter upon the second period of his spiritual and moral evolution. In the life of the wilderness, the rude but sweet struggle with the moods and powers of physical nature. Now the son of the Vallys goes forth to do battle with a subtler and more unlovely foe,—the crude conditions of life within a new and struggling mission. Few who know the little city of Meridian to-day,—its fine philanthropy the pride of the state, and its generous hospitality the delight of the visitor, can realize that, at the period of which we are about to treat, the now prosperous town was little more than a hamlet, most of the inhabitants of which, —great hearted people and true, found their resources taxed to the utmost to secure the daily necessities of life for those within the radius of the family circle. Especially was this true of the staunch and kindly men and women compos-

ing the little Roman Catholic congregation,—pioneers, who, in most instances, had been led to the village by proffered employment upon some of the railroads at that time building. Notable exceptions, of course, existed; and one finds, here and there, prosperous as well as noble minded progenitors of the Meridian Catholic of to-day: but the dominant condition of the little congregation in the year 1870, was one of respected and self-respecting poverty. And it is to this point more than any other, that the attention of the reader should be drawn. Priest or layman, chief or subaltern who may read these lines, know that the real hero is the man strong enough to stand for Truth and Right when all the harpy fingers of hourly privation and of daily drudgery, are striving with might and main to tear him from his high ideal, and to wrest from shrinking heart and quivering nerve, a compromise with Evil. The uncrowned kings of the great universe; the men of power, the real lords of mind and matter, are not the Gladstones nor the Alexanders of the race; but the unknown men who fill the nameless graves after a lifelong and victorious battle with the petty cares and

lowly conditions of their environment. In the commonplace, hard, and repugnant duties that, in endless succession, lacerate the heart of the toiler in the hidden paths of life and action, are the pregnant seeds from which true greatness springs. We look abroad for strength and power and all the while their sacred fountains are gushing at our feet: we look afar for revelations, and messages more glorious than Sinai's are graven upon our homeliest implements of toil. Not from the distant heaven of some yearned for state or office falls the real manna of the human spirit; but deep in the loam of the lowly circumstance we spurn impatiently from our path. The "sacrament of the present moment," the virile unction of each hour's lowly need, acts like a sacred leaven upon the soul of the young pastor; permeating it, at this early period of his labors with the power and beauty that characterized his later ministry. First of the homely details,—veiled spirits of light that lead him onward, is his hand to hand struggle with debt, the debt upon his little sanctuary. If the undischarged obligation to the fellow man torments a refined and sensitive nature with more than

inquisitorial fury, with yet greater malignity did the debt upon his little church prey upon the mind and heart of Louis Vally. To his high strung spirit, the honor of the Master seemed involved, and no Red Cross went forth to save the Holy Places of the East, with keener enthusiasm than that which actuated our obscure Meridian pastor as he began his crusade against illiquidation. Clad in the armor of simplicity; wearing the impregnable cuirass of humility, the visor of faith, and holding the invincible lance of prayer, steadily and surely the young knight was victorious; and scarcely five years had passed when the last farthing of the heavy debt was paid, and the little fane was the unencumbered possession of the mission. With this weighty burden lifted from his heart, the ever buoyant, cheery nature of the son of the Vallys shed its innate brightness upon all things. The rudest circumstance, the most painful incident, the harshest trial became transformed in the light of his golden spirit into a thing of mirth, or a thing of beauty.

The kind-hearted mistress of the "Jones House," where we find our missionary estab-

lished at this period of his career, did what she could to lighten the burdens of the self-oblivious young priest; and mindful, especially, of the Friday obligation, personally superintended the preparation of his diet of fish upon that day. The good dame did her humble best; and among the memories of these early years, that of the kindly landlady of this primitive hostelry, was always dear to Louis Vally. At intervals, when the struggling spirit yearned for human sympathy, the inexperienced laborer for guidance, the Bishop of Mississippi would make his pastoral visits. In the tiny room at the boarding house, the father and son in Christ would pass long fruitful hours in conversation,—hours of pregnant and wholesome suggestion on the part of the elder, and of keen and eager questioning by the younger priest. And it often chanced in the homely manner of the place, that the boisterous, but well meaning knights of the road, who occupied the next compartment, would fling a convivial boot against the division wall, striving to call forth an answering salutation from the "fellows" next door. Failing to do so, expressions of varied though not ill-

natured, disgust would penetrate the thin partition. Little wotted the boisterous revellers, *who* those irresponsive neighbors might be, or upon what weighty business their attention was engrossed. Anon, while discussing "grace" or "dispensation," some rap of more than wonted vigor, accentuated by the newest Chimmie Fadden English, would bring a merry smile to the face of Bishop and of pastor. No feeling of resentment of the rude, but kindly folk arose in the spirits of either; but the urgent necessity of some private spot where the business of the Master could be looked to in quiet, began to take possession of the heart of Louis Vally, and the idea of building a presbytery was formed by the young missionary. With the great Apostle, the son of Lavaudieu exclaimed:—"I can do all things in Him who strengthens me." It is the war-cry of the spirit, the "*open sesame*" to the treasure house of power, from St. Michael to Pius the Tenth, from Paul of Tarsus to Father Damian, it has proved invincible. Let him who would achieve, cast Fear far from him, and trample under foot the lying form of Doubt;—success must be,—nay, already *is*, his portion;

"God and man together cannot fail." And Louis Vally did not fail. When once his mind, oblivious of his own comfort, was convinced that a presbytery would materially advance the cause of the King in whose high service he was enlisted, without a doubt, or hesitation, the young pastor looked again for ways and means. Clothing himself once more in the impregnable armor, our soldier goes forth to his second crusade. The Catholic congregration at that time numbered only about a hundred souls, infants included; but the missionary, having sought with every faculty of his being, the imperishable Kingdom of Heaven, possessed all things potentially, and was master, and not bondsman of conditions; and fashioned in the higher sense, in part, by his own untiring hands, the little dwelling place soon arose under the shadow of the church of the mission. To every plank was nailed a sacrifice, and all the homely place was wrought with prayer. Two bare little rooms composed the domicile; a bed, table, and chair, the furniture thereof. Beneath the lowly roof an anchorite might have felt at ease; little splinters from the rude, uncovered floor be-

tokened always the spiritual presence of the Cross; and over the rude mantel, its visible emblem was hung,—the centre and the circle of the life of the young habitant. "Le grand Monarque" never entered his Versailles with such deep delight, such pride, such glowing, triumphant satisfaction, as the young pastor of Meridian the little homestead all his own. There at least, though tapestry and gold were wanting, he could

> "Walk down the Valley of Silence,
> Down the dim, voiceless Valley,—alone!"
> And "hear not the fall of a footstep" around him
> "Save God's and" his own.

During the first simple days in the little domicile, the proud householder was his own housekeeper and Abigail, as he had been his own sexton in his little church. Humming a French *chanson*, he did the chores right merrily; and with childlike glee would sometimes laugh aloud to see the bright flames leap from the fragrant pine burrs gathered in the neighboring grove, and heaped in royal profusion in the little fireplace. Without fail, at noon and evening, and in the chill gray of the dawn, Louis Vally would

send the message of the Angelus to the little town, and with it, another message, the teaching of his own life-work.

And when the Sabbaths came, and the widely scattered members of the flock assembled in the simple pews to hear Low Mass,—the voice of music had not yet been lifted in the little fane because of straightened means,—and the people listened to the catechetical instructions of the young pastor, each and every one was conscious of the brooding presence of that Great Love of which the missionary told them so graphically; always of love, only love; love was his universe, as it is the universe, the life, the strength, the all, of every spirit standing in the Light.

Through the love of the Master to the love of the servant, by sweet and natural intuition, the hearts of the people began to know the heart of the pastor; and the great affection for him;—the love that lives at this day and will endure while one member of the little flock has life and memory, awoke in the souls of his people. And love answered unto love, for Louis Vally bore them in his heart until the end.

Never a preacher,—the gift of oratory was de-

nied him—but always a doer of the word. Therein lay his strength and singular magnetism. Growing himself into the image and likeness of the Master, the power of his Divine Prototype flowed freely through the clean channels of his spirit, and purified and uplifted the lives of all who came within his influence.

And thus his life flows on, widening, deepening, and bringing fertility as it flows. And it flows into the lives of the little children, whom he gathers into his catechism class, held, rain or shine, in the little church. Blithely, tenderly, the child heart of the pastor responds to the children's hearts around him. Here again, the old sweet theme,—love only, love always. Love God, and love each other; that is the whole law, the one great sermon of the Beloved Disciple, the supreme message and significance of the Word.

And each of those little ones went out with a new gladness about his heart, and that gladness made others glad, and is still rejoicing the world with the ever widening circles of its influence. After the lapse of a quarter of a century, those grown up little ones still remember the rapt look and glowing words with which the young

missionary spoke to them of God,—bade them love Him,—almost made them feel Him in their midst. And, despite labor and exhaustion, in all seasons and at any cost, that band of little ones, the *vivandieres* of the King was always assembled on the Sabbath. A catechist by grace, by love, he remained a catechist until the end.

And his life flowed into the lives of the men and youths of the congregation; and its swift and practical expression was an association known as "St. Patrick's Social and Benevolent Society." Under the tall pines opposite the church rose, as if by magic, a little frame building that did duty for library and club. Therein,—in so brief a period as to tax credulity, the nucleus of a library was collected; and by the nature of the volumes placed upon the shelves the missionary instructed his little flock in the rationale of the religion they professed, as well as promoted social intercourse among them.

To know not only how, but why we worship, not only what, but why we believe; is the paramount need of the age, a paramount obligation of the twentieth century American citizen; and any complete worship of the Supreme Intelligence

must unite the homage of the intellect with that of the heart and spirit. Upon the Roman Catholic American citizen, this duty devolves in a peculiar manner; and amid the conditions of modern civilization, the intelligent layman may become a more potent factor in the growth of Christianity than anchorite or missionary, than saint or seer. The present age, more than any of its predecessors, demands the O'Connells, and the Henry Gradys of Catholic Truth. The only two members of St. Patrick's Society who are living at the present writing, are Messrs. Bernard Daly and John Ready, both well-known citizens of Meridian. The rest have passed into the higher life, and have joined the pastor and beloved comrade of this.

And the life of Louis Vally flowed into the lives of the ignorant little ones of the Kingdom. In no life-work illumined by the Non-created Light, can the fundamental need of education be ignored. In the service of Supreme Wisdom all available knowledge should be enlisted. Not one of the Protean forms of Truth can be dispensed with; not one of its hieroglyphics, though writ with atom or with star, should remain unread.

In the Titanic struggle with the alien forces of agnosticism, it is the man of mind who does the virile work; and across the Beresina of unbelief, brains, as well as righteousness, must bear the Christian standard. And thus, in the little mission of Meridian, by the hand of Louis Vally—was planted the tiny seed from which, in after days so beautiful a fruit was destined to be gathered; and about the year 1876, the parish school opened under the tutorage of Rev. Hermann Oberfeldt.

It seems that just as his educational projects were beginning to twine themselves closer and closer about the heart of Louis Vally,—his strong desire almost crying aloud in its deep yearning for fulfilment, Father Oberfeldt, then an enthusiastic educator newly arrived from Germany, was sent by the Bishop of Mississippi to aid the young Meridian pastor in his arduous duties. Father Oberfeldt immediately proposed to act as teacher in the little school, if our indomitable missionary could supply the necessary desks and benches; and out of his inexhaustible treasure house of energy and action, Louis Vally procured the simple furnishings. The little

headquarters of St. Patrick's Society were made to do double duty; and one sunny morning, when earth seemed bathed in unwonted beauty to the jubilant heart of the son of the Vallys, the little folk of the parish, proud of the glories of newly starched apron and sunbonnet, and filled with naive expectation of all the wondrous things that were to transpire within the school, gathered beneath the big pine-trees, and entered the rude class rooms pell-mell, when, for the first time, the big bell called them there. And far above the pines, and past the zenith blue, where little cloudlets skimmed like birds, the Spirit of Wisdom brooded on its sacred theme, and shed its benedictions upon the little mission school. After the tiny institution was well inaugurated, which was done by the volunteer teacher in about two months, he was succeeded in his office by Miss Mary Murdock, now Mrs. McDermott of Water Valley, Mississippi, a young woman recommended by the Nazareth Sisters of Holly Springs, whose native force of character and bright personality became an important factor in the evolution of the Meridian mission. Not only did Miss Murdock win the hearts and con

trol the minds of her plastic pupils, but her advent inaugurated a new epoch in the history of the little church. Dwelling in the midst of carping cares, leading at this time also, a life of incessant bodily labor as well as mental anxiety, the spirit of Louis Vally dwelt apart, beautiful and calm, unhampered, undisturbed by his physical environment of tumult and of toil. Many souls can attain greatness lifted upon the mighty wings of solitude and of silence; many souls reach the high plateaus of power and inspiration to whom the even tenor of their way offers no obstacle to strength infusing meditation,—but greater far the human spirit that can achieve its noble destiny and live its highest life in the midst of sordid conditions and excessive manual labor. The life of Louis Vally at the present period of his career, laying, with his own hands, the rude foundations of school and presbytery, fashioning with his own spirit, the spiritual life of his people; but building also, within his individual soul, the imperishable temple of his high ideal. And his life flowed on with music. Ever, through spirit and mind and heart were sweet harmonies sounding through the being of the son

of Lavaudieu. That the voice of music should be silent in the sanctuary, while around him in the little town the glad hosannas of the King arose from worshipers in other temples became to Louis Vally a trial too severe to be longer endured. In this instance also, the honor of the Master seems involved; and with that watchword no odds can intimidate the young missionary in his hand to hand battle with circumstances. Almost imperceptibly, the means to purchase a little cabinet organ are procured; and the heart and hands that have brought a nobler music out of the inharmonious conditions of his environment, now accompany the first simple hymns that are sung in the little church. As the level rays of the westering sun pierce like glittering lances through the windows of the tiny sanctuary, the young pastor would seat himself at the little organ, and play with enthusiastic delight the royal chants of the Vesper psalms.

With the advent of Miss Murdock, came the yearned for opportunity of celebrating High Mass in his church, and on that first solemn and never to be forgotten Sabbath, the majesty, the

power, the high exultation of the sublime ritual, glorified and thrilled through the voice of the Celebrant. With the assistance of Miss Murdock, a little choir was organized, another simple but sweet beginning, from which, as a rose from the tightly closed bud, was destined to bloom the subtile, but powerful influence of music in the midst of the little flock.

# PART III

"For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth."

## CHAPTER XIII

### A MAN OF THE PEOPLE

THE man of truth belongs to all mankind. Poet and prophet, philosopher and priest, are the common heritage of humanity, and of no especial age or people, disciples or denomination. True it is that certain ministerial duties must be performed solely in behalf of their immediate followers, and an especial guardianship must be given the chosen ones more directly committed to their care; but all ministry that is real must be universal ministry, and the true ambassador of the Son of Man must bound his pastorate only by the rising and the setting of the sun. Whenever, between the cradle and the grave, faint and toil and suffer and rejoice immortal spirits, there are the ripening sheaves waiting to be garnered for the Master's harvest-home. In the close press of non-conforming brethren, side by side with atheist and agnostic, giving the

warm hand clasp to pessimism, the fraternal embrace to cynic and Unitarian, the true apostle must be found, following step by step the foot-prints of the Master through the motley multitudes of Scribe and Pharisee, of Sadducee and idolater. Strikingly was this characteristic manifested in the life and work of Louis Vally. Not only those directly entrusted to his spiritual leadership, but few men or women, irrespective of denomination, ever came within the radius of his life without yielding to its gentle magnetism. The true within us must ever respond to Truth. About the magnet of a righteous life, the needle of righteousness in other lives must gather. Truth is power; and high ideals are strong archangels that control the vital elements of human destinies.

Jew and Gentile, atheist and agnostic begin to seek the society of the young priest, to listen to his converse, to ask his sound advice. Often in the quiet evenings, the two chairs of the dwelling being occupied, the little bed does duty for settee. Infused with practical wisdom and true intuition, the modestly given counsels of the young pastor are seldom known to fail of

successful application; and from his high integrity weaker spirits draw fortitude and comfort. Sweet and solemn scenes are often enacted within the little presbytery, and the waves of human wrong and misery, of human sin and sorrow, break upon its threshold, almost overwhelming, anon, the sympathetic heart of the young missionary.

It is related of him at this time that many non-Catholic residents of the growing town, were wont to take before him any solemn pledge of reformation they desired to make.

Perhaps the supreme test of a well poised character is found in the unpleasant encounters that occasionally take place between people who entertain different religious convictions.

To these peculiarly trying incidents, a priest is even more liable than a laymen. But with a self mastery that disarmed the most intent, and a flawless courtesy that gave gentle, though positive refutation to his antagonists, the young pastor of Meridian was rarely known to make an enemy. The Prince of the House of David was the arch-gentleman of the world; and it behooves his anointed ministers, even more than other

men, to practice the amenities of social intercourse. But not only did Louis Vally give strength to the hearts and light to the souls of his people, but, as a man among men, he was closely in touch with the social life of the community, and a potent factor in all movements that promoted its welfare. The priest is still the man. No office, however sublime, dispenses the individual from the fundamental duties of man to man,—the unit to the human race, the citizen to the commonwealth. A keen realization and practical fulfilment of this obligation cannot be too seriously urged upon the clergy of all denominations, in this twentieth century of Christian civilization. The binding duty imposed by social ethics, was uniformly observed by the young Meridian pastor, whose deepening devotion to the cause of humanity found no service too humble that would lighten the yoke of the brother, no mental or physical exertion too great to be made, if the lot of the fellow man could be alleviated thereby. An incident of this characteristic of Father Vally is found in the little bell of St. Patrick's that gave the Angelus message to the people, sounded also, for many years, the

fire alarm to the little community;—both were rung by the hands of Louis Vally.

After the destruction of the Phœnix Hotel, an old Meridian landmark, the young pastor of the Roman Catholic mission organized a fire company, and became one of its most active and efficient members. Full of pathetic humor are some of the anecdotes his grateful people tell of the indefatigable missionary in his capacity of volunteer fireman. It is said, that, when the old Jones House, his almost tenderly remembered hostelry, caught fire one fierce December night, Louis Vally, in his supreme desire to save the manse, slipped on the icy roof, and plunged headlong into a barrel of half frozen water. Though nearly perishing with cold, as the water rapidly congealed about his limbs, his irrepressible wit flashed forth for an instant. Realizing the humor of the situation, he exclaimed to his erstwhile landlady, who, beholding the catastrophe, rushed frantically to the spot:—"Aha! madam! you would make a Baptiste of me, but I'll get you yet." And he did; about the year 1886, the retired proprietress, always one of his staunchest friends, was received by his own min-

istrations into the circle of his little flock. At another time, it is related, while on duty with his brigade, the pastor fireman was severely injured by a falling chimney, but, almost miraculously, escaped.

In addition to his labors in the immediate circle of his congregation, and his philanthropic work in the community at large, the young Father Vally still retained some of his missions in the distant portions of the state.

His journeys to and fro are now attended by the dangers arising from the disturbed state of society, as well as the perils of forest and prairie. Nearly eight years have passed since our French missionary assumed the Meridian pastorate; and the wild, lawless epoch of the carpet-bagger is at hand. The spirit of unrest, of anarchy, of every species of civil disturbance, is abroad in Mississippi, and the state is passing through the most sinister period of its civic history. A political chaos seems to engulf all things. The tremendous wave of Reconstruction, dashing upon the ruins of the old order, leaves a horrid flotsam and jetsam, a deadly putrescence, the evil odors of which fill all the land with foul miasma. All

periods of transition are tumultuous, and the Juggernaut of social evolution must trample the bleeding forms of a thousand perishing ideals. Intoxicated with the strong hasheesh of freedom, the negro stalks, a horrid menace to the land. Crushed and blood-stained like the "Conquered Banner," the power of thought and action seems for a time suspended in southern men.

The reeking arm of Civil war, has lifted American civilization to a more sublime plateau; but in the lifting has left the bleeding roots of the Old Régime festering in the strong sunlight of the New. In these turbulent times no man's property or life is sacred. Law has forsaken his tribunals, and Order weeps beside the new made graves. Deep is the night in the hour that precedes dawn, and deeper far the gloom that ever heralds Cosmos. But calmly upon his upward way, pausing not, nor swerving from his path, walks the pastor of Meridian through these turbulent times, and in all his lonely pilgrimages to and from his missions, he is seldom molested. But one alarming incident is related, half in jest, half in earnest, by the pastor himself in later years.

A more than wonted darkness seemed to fall with the December night, and the muffled footsteps of the snow trod noiselessly upon the dusk, as Louis Vally, worn out from a pilgrimage to a distant part of the state, reaches the Meridian station at midnight, and steps upon the rough plank walk that leads diagonally through the thick wood to the gate of his little presbytery. As rapidly as his over-weary limbs will allow, the missionary is hastening toward his domicile, when the dull thud of a heavy step sounds regularly behind him. Glancing furtively into the gloom, the travel weary pastor dimly discerns a man's figure in the increasing darkness. Faster and faster the snowflakes begin to fall, resting, like visible caresses upon the giant pines, and weaving a thin gauze upon the forest aisles. Still Louis Vally walks onward, an enforced haste urging his tired steps. Still the dull, continual tread in the rear, pausing when he pauses, proceeding when he proceeds. Always the shadowy form behind him keeps its distance. Glancing anxiously at his missionary valise, wherein the sole treasures of the little church lie hidden,—the sacred vessels of the Sacrifice and

Sacraments,—the exhausted pastor presses forward with renewed energy, his gait almost quickening to a run. As he does so, the heavy footsteps draw nearer, and his mysterious pursuer gradually gains upon him. Now the little gate is reached, Louis Vally hastily pushes it open—a few steps and shelter will be obtained. Little recking of his own welfare, but almost frenzied with anxiety because of the sacred burden he carries, the closely pressed and entirely unarmed missionary gains his door, almost gasping for breath. As he nervously attempts to turn the key, a heavy hand is laid upon his shoulder, and a pair of piercing eyes glare into his own,—the eyes of the tiger about to spring upon its victim. Before Louis Vally can speak, however, the rude hand is withdrawn, the savage light dies from the eyes, the whole figure of the man takes on a different aspect, shrinking, almost cowering, before the calm gaze of the missionary. "Your pardon, Father, I took you for another." "My God!" the hoarse murmur of the departing stranger is heard by the amazed priest, upon the intense stillness of the hour;—"My God! not *that!*—how nearly I had slain a priest!"

And when, in the dark days that followed, rumor of foul murder done in the solemn shadows of the pines came to the ear of Louis Vally, kneeling in the silence of his little sanctuary, he gave thanks to the Great Preserver, as well as Author of all life, that he was spared to labor yet a little longer in His Vineyard.

The fountain of sweet waters that gives refreshment to the multitude, must draw its abounding life from hidden springs within the hills. So the pure and virile inspiration dispensed by the young pastor to his fellow men, is fed by the sacred springs of prayer, and of ever increasing love for the Creator, and of the beauty of His works. Foremost among the latter in the uplifting influence and potent ministry to the spiritual progress of the missionary himself, were the gentle revelations of the flowers, the sweet gospels that he daily read from the beautiful Scriptures of his little garden. Where the Supreme Artist dwells, music should lift her voice in worship, and the purest flowers should bloom. Ever true to his great love of the Master, Father Vally plants the seeds of the little garden that for many years shed sweet odor about the altar

and his heart. Laboring, in the rare moments he can spare from his almost unremitting toil as a missionary priest, curtailing the already scanty hours of his sleep, the young pastor fashions with his own hands a little greenhouse wherein the sweet comrades of his heart may live when winter comes. And when the first bulbs lift their emerald spears, the lily unfolds her white petals, and the rose, leaf by leaf reveals her crimson heart, the spirit of the young priest rejoices with a joy that every morning with its sweet surprises is destined to increase.

And as a rose that rarely blooms alone, but nearly always brings a sister rose; so every holy joy and pure desire, brings a sister joy unto the soul. Soon all the little congregation know the pastor's love for his tiny garden plot; and from far and near, from the village and its suburbs, came offerings of precious bulbs and of abundant seed. And thus is sown the little garden of the Meridian mission, and thus is sown another garden,—wherein the *immortelles* unfold, in the heart of pastor and of flock. A second and even deeper spring whence is nourished the inner life of the missionary, is the inspiring friendship of

Rev. John Baptiste Mouton. Of all sources of illumination, and potent factors of progressive spiritual and intellectual life, none is more powerful than the communion with a kindred spirit, the touch of mind and mind, the friction of harmonious though diverse intelligences, from which is kindled the pure Promethean spark of mutual inspiration. The strong individuality of Father Mouton stamps its noble outlines upon the character and labors of the younger priest; while a refluent stream of love and virile suggestion, refreshes the spirit of the elder of the comrades. And in those shadowy hours of intangible despondency and of spiritual questioning to which the noble and sensitive nature is peculiarly liable, the sound judgment and uplifting presence of John Baptiste Mouton is an unfailing light, a hope and an inspiration.

Father Mouton had, previous to this period, grown steadily more powerful, gathering new strength and impetus from the obstacles, the trials, the daily struggles of human life. Devotion to the Man of Galilee, the Supreme Friend of humanity, becomes a sublime passion in the heart of Louis Vally; daily, he presses more

closely to His side; daily he feels more keenly the touch and influence and stimulus of His Presence. Into mind and heart and character the divine infusion permeates, and always, and through all circumstances, the young missionary walks upward and onward to the Light.

And by the virile compulsion of his high integrity, the mighty spiritual gravity by which all good, even material prosperity, is drawn toward the orbit of a strong and fearless spirit, the outward environment of Louis Vally begins to change, and is, gradually, almost imperceptibly, softened. Simple and deep are the workings of the great Architect of human destinies; crude and insignificant in seeming. M. Vigne having been appointed pastor of Paulding, and was frequently a visitor to the little Meridian presbytery, while the younger pastor, in his journeying to and from his scattered missions, was often the guest, for a night, of his well-beloved friend.

But besides the pure fountains of natural beauty, and of intellectual companionship, he nourished the fine impulses of his spirit from another, and a celestial source, and he drinks long and deeply, of the Stream of Living Waters; in the quiet of

the midday, when no sound save his own footstep wakes the echoes in the little church, he is wont to recite his Breviary in the presence of the King; and during the twenty-two years of incessant labor, fails only on two occasions to offer the Mighty Sacrifice. Like a noble stream ever deepening and widening until it plunges into the bosom of the sea, his love of the Humanity of Christ as manifested in the Wonderful Sacrament, the implements of His choosing. One sunny day there comes to the little presbytery an old South Carolina darky, whose ebony head holds its bright bandana high in the air, and whose portly form is starched with self-complacency because of having been owned, in the old régime, by "rustocratic white folks." "Aunt Lucy," as she announced herself, "ain't no Mississippi nigger"; no, not she, but she is a member of the Church where state pride does not enter, and even the Mason and Dixon line must be blotted out in the victorious Union of Brotherly Love. And so "Aunt Lucy," one of the simple lives set adrift by the New Order, and the only Catholic negress in the Meridian mission, imbued with a loyalty that would do honor to a whiter

breast, comes of her own account and offers her services to Louis Vally. "Jes' gimme whut yer kin spare in the line ob wages," she explains, "an' I'll cook de meals an' ring de church bell, an' stick to you fur good, sure's my name's Lucy Thomas." A new régime now begins in the domicile. With the advent of his Abigail, the young pastor is spared the inconvenience of taking his meals at a boarding house; he can live indeed, beneath his humble roof, and offer such simple hospitality as the presbytery affords. Precious beyond measure are the services of the sable Carolinian and to be retained at any odds. But the ebony dame must be accommodated, and the wits of the young pastor must set to work anew.

There is the little cow house,—the improvised home of the mild-eyed Jersey, a recent present from a kindly parishioner, and a valuable addition to the Vally commissary. The amateur stable (of his own making) does well enough for Betty, who does not seem fastidious; but for the august person of Aunt Lucy!—shall he dare to hazard the suggestion? Something must be done, and that something instantly. Quartering his awe-inspiring aid-de-camp, for a couple of

nights, upon a good-natured neighbor, Louis Vally goes to work. Aunt Lucy means leisure, priceless, priceless, inestimable leisure; leisure for prayer, for meditation, sweet communion of the Master; and the thought nerves his arm with double strength. The wondering, but unresisting Betty is unceremoniously pressed into closer quarters. One-half of her stable is boarded off and a rude flooring placed therein. Only an indomitable will can perform the feat of subtracting something from nothing; but from the hermit-like poverty of the little manse, the young pastor manages to find wherewithal to give his handmaiden's quarters the appearance of a bedroom. A capacious dry goods box is mustered into service, and some rough planks do noble duty. The damsel's quilts are curiously utilized, and—presto! the barrack of the second soldier of the mission is ready for the recruit. But is the recruit ready for the barrack? Blood-curdling question! what if the private deserts, appalled by the privations of the campaign? With thumping heart and hesitating voice, he constitutes himself a body-guard of one to conduct the Carolinian to her new domain. Tossing her bandana

head yet higher in the air, Aunt Lucy inquires sententiously :—"Whar's dis here residence at, Father Vally?" Venturing no reply, the young missionary walks dejectedly on, his trepidation increasing at every step, his courage oozing at every pore. Hardly daring to look at his sable companion, Louis Vally throws open the door of the erstwhile cow shed. As he does so, a rippling laugh bursts from the lips of the stately darky, half startling, half annoying her downcast cicerone. A mild rebuke is about to leap to the lips of Louis Vally, when Aunt Lucy checks her untimely mirth, and places her black hands reverently and half tenderly upon the sleeve of her disconcerted young host. The cause of her amusement is remote from that suspected by the young missionary. "Law, Father!"—the white teeth begin to shine again in an ever broadening grin. "Law, Father! dis 'oman ain't no snide nigger. Lucy Thomas can lib mos' anywhar, an' still hol' her hed above de po' white trash. Don't yer min' de 'commodations. I an' Betsey 'll get 'long 'mazinly!" With keen sagacity and a ready eye to the situation, the sagacious darky had seen the young pastor's predicament, and her

uncouth laughter was prompted by the kindly wish to put him at his ease. On the spot is inaugurated, between Abigail and master the notable firm, as Aunt Lucy phrased it—of "I an' Father Vally," and it ran without bankruptcy for more than twenty years; then death dissolved the partnership.

## CHAPTER XIV

### RECESSIONAL

THE spring of 1876 clothes the garden of the presbytery with a greater beauty than it has ever known. Everywhere the green stalks lift their emerald arms, as though in prayer beneath the April sky. A thousand sweet surprises greet the gardener at each step. Every bed is an Apocalypse, every nook and corner is radiant with Easter. Each seed sown in the winter springs into glorious life; the serried legions of the lilies stand like white robed virgins about the door of the little sanctuary, and the hyacinths, like acolytes, ring their purple bells in a jubilant *Gloria*. With the bursting of the seed and bulb, and the uplifting of the tender grass spires, a hope that has lain like the lilies in the soil, fallow through the long winter of struggle and privation in the heart of the missionary, begins to take on form and beauty, to bud and bloom therein. Whoso enters the deep Valley

of Renunciation bears with him the same human heart,—bruised, nay, even broken it may be, but throbbing with the same affections, the same deep love for country, home, and kindred. True it is, that his spiritual universe knows no bounds, reaching from eternity to eternity; that the kindred of his soul dwell in every land between the rising and the setting sun; but the strong cords of Adam by which he is drawn to the hearthstone of his youth, are inextricably woven into the fabric of his being. No normal individual is less the man because of great ideals and heroisms. Human nature must be fired with God; not obliterated, or unwisely ignored. Through the exaltation, and not the suppression of all true emotions, we rise to our full stature, and attain a royal liberty. The heart of man is like the flower that turns always to the sun; when firmly rooted in the soil of duty, it ever looks with longing toward the solar light of God-inspired human love that gave it birth. And the deep yearning of the soul of Louis Vally to behold once more his home and kindred, touched by the magic hand of prayer, becomes a radiant hope, an assured promise.

Slowly, as the time ripens, ways and means thereto are gathered from many sources and fashioned by the Supreme Workman. The universe belongs to him who trusts, and men and angels serve the true believer. From the four points of the compass come the means to do His will; all things and circumstances are His instruments.

Years before, in the broken heart of the French Eugenie, the Master sowed a seed of patriotic love; and behold, the beautiful plant of a great charity sprang forth. Subsidizing the owners of a line of French steamers between New York and Havre from her private means, the agreement was made that all missionary sons of France should be given free passage when they desired to visit the land of their birth. The world has seldom known a more tender or refined philanthropy; and through its ministry Louis Vally obtains the fulfilment of his hope. The little congregation is now better organized. Rev. C. M. Vigue has been appointed pastor of Paulding, and John Baptiste Mouton, finding his labors somewhat lightened, volunteers to care for our young pastor's mis-

sions, thus enabling Louis Vally to realize the fondest desire of his heart. Friendship counts no costs; and friendship knows no distrust; so with perfect self-forgetfulness on the part of the elder, and perfect trust on that of the younger priest, Louis Vally commits his beloved pastorate, for the nonce, into the heart and hand of his well beloved friend. To the news of the shepherd's intended departure, the deep love of his flock makes swift response, and, through a thousand delicate channels, substantial aid finds its way into the little presbytery. Radiant with happiness, but stifling a sob of grief as he bids adieu to his little parish, Louis Vally sets out for New York *via* Vicksburg, pausing long enough in the little city to say some farewell words to the Sisters of Mercy,—an order for which, during the whole of his ministerial life, he cherished an exalted admiration. Mentioning within the convent his threefold object in returning home,—the supreme desire to behold his mother, to celebrate the great Sacrifice in the church of his native hamlet, and to make the pilgrimage to Lourdes, then attracting recruits from every part of the civilized world,—he is asked by a member of the

community what request he intends to make to the great Mother. Without a moment's hesitancy, the young missionary makes answer :—"I will say to her, 'O wonderful Lady, I have no malady for you to cure, but I ask you to make me as strong as a pine knot, so that I can return and build a church and convent in Meridian.'"

No thought of self is to enter into his petition. In New York he is joined by Rev. Florimond Blanc; and the two erstwhile students of Le Puy, fellow travelers on the momentous journey to the New World, embark side by side, once more to return into the Old.

On shipboard, our companions found a large body of clergy assembled, among whom were Rev. P. M. L. Massardier, of St. John's Parish in New Orleans, and several other countrymen, bound, like themselves, for their native France.

As the vessel crosses the bar and plunges into the silent immensity, a mighty calm lies on the ocean. The solemn waters are asleep; even the great heart of the sea seems, for the nonce, to have ceased its throbbing. A few drowsy sea-birds float languidly about the masts; and only the soft lapping of the waves against the

steamer gives evidence that the awful ocean lives and murmurs in its dreaming. A great stillness possesses all things. It is as though nature held her breath.

Comfortably ensconced in the steamer, our band of clergymen from the American missions exchange reminiscences,—wild tales of the wilderness, weird incidents in their hard and perilous lives. Toil worn men they are; men inured to every hardship, men led by the Spirit, and from the Spirit drawing a visible strength. Worn in constitution, almost wrecked in health, the *dolce-far-niente* of the hour comes like a healing angel unto each; and the Spirit of Rest, so long an alien, is lured once more unto each bosom. Intent upon a story told by Louis Vally, the clergymen have not heeded the sinister cloud that lies like a serpent upon the eastern horizon, nor do they see the look of anxiety upon the usually beaming face of the captain standing aft. Aroused, however, by the peculiar snapping sound of a sail forced against the wind, the missionaries become conscious of an unusual bustle about them. But before they are able to grasp the peril of the situation, a tremendous gust, like

a mighty monster springing full armed from the womb of the approaching storm, sweeps over the vessel, catching one of the smaller masts, and twirling it in its Titan arms like a whirligig, sending a deep shiver through the noble ship. In an instant, the entire crew strain at the loosened sail; but the awful arms of the tempest defy their utmost might. The strong seamen toil until nerve and sinew are well-nigh bursting, and some of the passengers are pressed into service. Foremost among these, is Louis Vally, who, at the beck of the captain, springs forward to the aid of the exhausted crew. It is now about six in the morning, and the tardily rising sun of spring trails a gold carpet across the sea, making a shining pathway for the storm. A swift glance oceanward, reveals to Louis Vally the fearful majesty of the gathering tempest. In the mighty drama of the deep, a great transformation scene has been wrought. The sea is waking fiercely from its sleep, and its passionate heart throbs more audibly each moment. A dull leaden hue stains the troubled waters, making the golden path look lurid. An angry froth gathers and curdles upon the swelling ocean,

and the hoarse voices of the breakers thunder their resistless cannonade, churning the waters into blinding spray. Still the gold sun path lives upon the waves, rising, sinking, throbbing, with the convulsions of the tempest, accentuating the deepening gloom of the storm. Rapidly, as the shrieks of the tempest grow louder, the affrighted passengers below, hastily aroused from their morning slumbers, gather upon deck, wide eyed and pallid, gazing, horror-stricken upon the sea, or falling frantically upon their knees in incoherent prayer. Still, the sail, loosed from its harness, whirls frantically in the monster grasp of the storm. The resources of the ship are taxed to the utmost; passengers and crew are well-nigh spent; and still the small piece of canvas hisses like a fiend its defiance of their strength. In the savage clutch of such stupendous force, man seems less than the drops of spray wrung from the deep agony of the waters. Man! king of thought, and heir of life;—man! infinitesimal atom in the universe of dust! Man! God-made, and God-like, greater than the ocean, more impotent than the grain of sand!

"*What am I that Thou shouldst know me?*"

And the hiss and war of the waters, the tumult of human hearts on deck, the horrid tearing of the still uncontrolled sail at its moorings,—the words are clearly spoken in the inmost being of Louis Vally. Scarcely twenty yards of canvas and the invisible whirlwind, and man is made the plaything of their caprice!

The path upon the inky waters widens; the tardy sun lifts a golden rim above the angry east, as though to crown the storm. Looking eastward once again, the missionary beholds the light gradually gaining upon the darkness, and the fierce fingers of the tempest relax their iron clutch upon the mast. Seeing this, the captain signals all hands to strain at the ropes of the loosened sail once more. Slowly the white canvas ceases its convulsive writhing, and, like a tired bird ensnared by a trapper, flutters feebly into position. The golden path upon the sea widens into a vast field of radiance; and here and there, the retreating footsteps of the tempest show black upon the gold. Light glorifies, transforms, conquers all things; and, born of the light, comes to the son of the Vallys a deep sense of

the eternal truth, that behind man's impotence, stands the boundless power of the Deity; that the child of Adam is master of the universe, and possesses within his spiritual nature a power to which the elemental forces are feeble in comparison. Man, the crown and conqueror of nature; at once the master and the slave of time! In the boundless ocean of the spirit, tempests fiercer than the rage of wind and waters break from the immortal deeps; anguish vaster than the woe of storm-lashed sea; joys transcending the utmost glory of the finite ocean.

And while the raging elements hurled their fury against the goodly ship, another, and a vaster tempest was enacting.

Deep in the close-packed and ill-ventilated steerage, a coarsely-clad woman bends above her dying son. Like her of Nain, she is a widow, and this her only boy, though two little daughters are pressing to her side. The brand of destitution is upon her person,—the fierce scars of care, the livid prints of mental struggle and of physical privation. A sudden lurch of the vessel shakes rudely the pallid face upon the rugged berth, causing a half-suppressed cry of agony to

burst from the lips of the stricken mother. Above the awful tumult of the storm, a babel of human voices, discordant with fear, fill the shifting steerage with horrid pandemonium. The hatchways have been closed; and the tainted atmosphere reeks with the foul odors of drugs and adulterated spirits. Gliding like a thing of evil through the air, the insidious fumes of opium surreptitiously smoked by one of the passengers who strives to lose the awful agony of his life in a transient Nirvana. And death walks amid these living dead; and sin broods like a visible presence within the place. Lounging in tattered hammocks, stretched upon the repulsive berths, lying prone upon the reeking floor, are men and women, *dead*, though drawing vital breath; dead in iniquity, shrouded in moral and mental darkness, sepulchred in tombs of passion, and writhing in the inferno of stimulant and drug. Here and there, groups of the better class are huddled together anon, a prayer is uttered; but all turn their haggard eyes,—eyes filled with human sympathy in rare instances,—eyes bleared and brutal—toward the widow's son, watching, with morbid interest, the work of death among them.

As absorbed, as remote from her environment as though in some silent desert, the heart-broken widow gazes upon the fading countenance, all her faculties merged in sight. In the solitude of supreme emotion, her spirit stands alone. Slowly, the dying eyes are opened,—one look, in which the mother's life would fain pass into the perishing form of the son;—now the chill upon the frame of the young man begins to deepen, freezing the heart in the bosom of the watcher. To the benumbed faculties of the woman, cold seems to permeate all things. It is as though the very spirit of her were locked in ice; a rigid agony settles upon her features. The savage indifference of the tempest, the unconcerned gaze of her fellow-passengers, everything,—a fierce temptation seems to whisper, "Everything is cold to grief—cold as God." But a voice husky with emotion sounds in her ear, and a kindly hand is laid upon her shoulder. For the first time, the heart-broken mother removes her eyes from her dead. Louis Vally kneels tenderly beside the bed, and draws the stained coverlid over the stiffening form. "All is dead, good mother; *God lives.*" "But *these* must die," the agonized

widow murmurs, pointing to the two little girls that cower beside the bed; "he was our sole support; there will be no bread." Again the missionary speaks:—"Bread will come, Christ will send it, if you will believe." And the widow answers, "*I believe.*"

Through the now open hatches, one ray from the broad sun path without, cleaves the loathsome atmosphere and rests upon the widow and her dead.

That night, when a mighty calm had touched the troubled sea to perfect peace once more, and all nature seemed quick with God, Louis Vally, hand in hand with the tiny daughters of the widow, told crew and passengers of the awful tragedy below; told them of the white, dead face of the son, the frozen features of the living mother; told them of the awful destitution of the little ones at his side. Gradually, his audience gathers around him,—captain and mate, crew and passengers. Ceasing suddenly to address them, Louis Vally lifted his voice, and intoned the hymn to the Virgin. Placing his arms about the timid children, he signed them to sing. Reluctantly at first, but gathering courage, the

little ones blended their voices in the chorus. The sweet, familiar words brought strength, and soon the singers were oblivious of their surroundings. Out between the starry heavens and the star-flecked waters, the childish plea for help, for strength, for protection, drifted and mingled with the gentle influence of the night. Weaving all the yearning, the sympathy, the love of his nature for humanity into song, Louis Vally sang on and on. When the hymn was over, the passengers sobbed unrestrainedly, and the rough seamen turned aside their heads. Taking a tattered cap from the head of one of the little ones, the son of the Vallys passed it silently among the crowd. Every heart and purse therein responded; and the stricken widow and children were placed above immediate need.

In the quiet days that followed, when sky and ocean shut out the great world of men and cities, only the little world on the shipboard seemed to demand their hearts of love, Louis Vally and Florimond Blanc would make frequent visits to the steerage, ministering to the spirits and the bodies of the sufferers therein. And this deep sympathy for the unfortunate ones on board, en-

deared the two missionaries likewise to fellow passengers and to crew.

The great central ocean has now been passed. The beloved shores of their "La Belle France" begin to draw a faint outline on the horizon. At the sight of their native shores, the heart of every Frenchman on board, leaps within his bosom, and the deep waters of patriotism flood every spirit with strong emotion.

In such a mood this evening upon the moon-bathed deck, the voice of Louis Vally arises in the grand chant of the Marseillaise. Oblivious of all things, the mighty enthusiasm of the Frenchman lifts his spirit with resistless power. Not a sound is heard on shipboard; every Frenchman in the little band thrills with overpowering emotion. Few among them have ever heard their national anthem sung like this. No soul can fully appreciate civil liberty that has not first been filled with spiritual freedom, and with this freedom is Louis Vally free. And the power of it rings triumphantly, entoning a thousand pæans in his voice.

"*Allons enfants de la patrie*," *etc.*

But in the solemn stillness that follows, the deep voice of the ocean seems to sob:

"*Liberty lies dead in France, slain by her misguided sons.*"

## CHAPTER XV

### THE TOUCH OF MIDAS

WHILE the ship that bears the son of the Vallys homeward is braving the changeful humors of the sea, enthusiastic preparations for his reception are *en tapis* in the little village of Lavaudieu. Simon and Marie, inebriated with joy at the prospect of the exile's speedy return, set no bounds to their exuberant delight, no limit to their loving efforts to make his welcome one befitting his sacred office, and long to be remembered in the hamlet. For more than a fortnight, the little household has been in a tumult of busy expectation. New linen, sweet-scented with lavendar and bay, is unearthed from the big cedar chest, and the windows and floor and furniture of the awe-inspiring company bedroom, are made immaculate by scrubbing-brush and polish. Good old wine left from the vintage that warmed the hearts of the folks at the wedding of Simon and Marie, produced only upon occasions of the ut-

most solemnity, is disentombed from its cob-webbed crypt in a mysterious corner of the cellar, and placed within handy reach; mammoth pies are baked, and tarts and cookies are prepared, for the lad that is coming used to love them to be sure, and "men are only grown-up boys," thinks Marie with an audible chuckle. The gray goose is fattening, and the tender shoat will be killed by and by. Then there is a yearling lamb, and there is, ah me! there are so many things awaiting, that the good dame is all a-flurry with the thought of them, and sometimes, when there is nothing else to do, will turn round and round, and hurry hither and thither from sheer excess of energy.

Outside, to meadow and mountain and vine-yard, spring has brought a beautiful mantle of joy and exuberant life; all nature seems decked for some high festival. To the guileless hearts of the elder Vallys, the external world rejoices in their joy; never has season given such abundant promise, never has the carnival of the blossoms marshaled such legions of leaf and bud. The very household pets seem to know that the young priest is coming. Did not Jack, the clever

pointer, sniff enquiringly last night, about Louis' favorite chair?

And if excitement runs high in the home of the Vallys, scarcely less enthusiasm is felt in the hamlet itself. An electrical atmosphere of expectancy pervades the place. Little knots of the villagers gather here and there on the principal street, and now and then the passer-by hears scraps of dialogue, trebly accentuated by gesticulation.

"I tell you, Mere Brousard," says old Mere Julie, craning her neck from her window as the latter passes by; "the folk do tell that Marie Vally's son is rich,—richer than the mayor—than all Lavaudieu!" "Don't believe no such gab, Rose Brousard; but—*maybe* there's something in it;"—the resentful assurance in her voice wilts to a tone of mystery—"*Maybe* there's something in it. Ciel! I wonder if Marie Vally'd like a helping hand in her baking? They *do* say she is working herself nigh dead; but she's starched that stiff, I'm kinder fear'd to ax her." "Kinder *feared*, Rose Brousard,—if that don't beat the Israelites!—kinder *feared!* well, I reckon you'd better be downright good fashioned

*skeered*, considering the shame you put on her when Louis went away, and considering you ain't crossed her threshold since that blessed day she turned on you, nigh eight years agone."

"*Bien! Bien!* Julie," sneers the irate pedestrian; "if I ain't been to the Vallys', no more have you. And if you *have* been to the Vallys' I guess you didn't stay longer than a grease spot would stay on Satan's pitchfork;—Marie made it too hot for you."

"*Taisez! taisez!* Mere Brousard; the money ain't come yet, and I guess Marie Vally 'll look after it when it does," retorts Julie, as a parting shot. But the indignant Mere Brousard is making headway down the street.

For days before the vessel upon which Louis has taken passage is due in the harbor of Havre, the eager Simon and Marie, thinking that some unusual circumstance might bring the lad home before the appointed day, repair to the little depot to meet every morning train, followed, at a respectful distance, by a motley crowd of the villagers. At each new disappointment, the anxious parents return dejectedly to their home,

but renew on the morrow their pilgrimage *d'amour*.

Louis, meanwhile, having landed safely at Havre, proceeds at once to Paris, and lingers a couple of days in the capital in order to purchase *dragées* for the villagers and a new cassock in which to greet the mother and the dear ones at home. Worn threadbare by the jeans of toil in the Meridian mission, the old garment must now be put aside to do honor to the simple folk of Lavaudieu. The slight delay necessitated by the purchases, strains the patience of the village folk to the utmost tension; and, as the train actually bearing the prodigal draws slowly into the station, *Mere Rose* nudges her nearest neighbor, and exclaims in a stage whisper that goes clear as a shot to the ears of Marie Vally, whose portly form fairly bristles at the words;—"I don't believe that lad's a-coming anyhow; it's just a fake put up by the Vallys;—here are my new sabots nigh worn out with ——" But the housewife's lament sizzles into a gasp, as a familiar arm thrust through the car window, waves frantically to the crowd. Every eye turns toward the coach, and with an instinct of innate refinement,

the peasants fall back a few paces, allowing Marie and Simon Vally to stand to the front. Within the coach, Louis Vally draws his new cassock from his little valise, and, assisted by Monsieur Blanc, robes himself therein, for his trembling fingers cannot master the brand-new buttonholes unaided.

Slowly the train crawls into the station;—a couple of minutes, during which the heart of the young priest bounds in his bosom, and all the joy and tears and yearning of his whole life seem to gather within his breast and almost to suspend his breath—now, the sharp jolt of the train, and the harsh call of the porter,—"Lavaudieu!"

For a dizzy second, a slight mist blots platform and crowd from the sight of the exile;—another instant, the arms of Marie Vally are folded tightly about him, and the head of Louis drops upon her bosom with the gesture of a tired child.

Not one of that eager crowd of spectators makes a single step forward; spellbound by the strong emotion of the Vallys, every mother's heart among them beats in sympathy, and the eyes of every father are dim with tears which fall unchecked upon the toil worn faces.

After a long sweet moment into which an eternity seems compressed, Louis Vally lifts his head, and looks straight into the eyes of Marie. It is one of those looks in which spirit touches spirit;—"Ma Mere!"—the words are scarcely heard by the nearest villager; those of Marie,—"*Mon fils!*" so low the voices that gave them utterance; but from the utmost heaven where the Supreme Paternity of the Father broods above the universe, through all creation, even to earth's utmost solitudes, where the savage mother lulls her sable offspring, the words are reechoed, and will reecho through eternity. The gruff tones of the porter trundling a hand truck bearing the baggage of the two missionaries, arouses the spellbound folk of Lavaudieu to a sense of their environment, and the spell of strong emotion is broken. Simultaneously, the villagers press forward, seizing the person of the dazed son of the Vallys, and laying strong but affectionate hands upon M. Blanc, nearly smothering both in an avalanche of caresses.

Her buxom person having been pressed to the edge of the crowd in the mêlée, Mere Brousard finds herself unceremoniously joggled into the

baggage truck. Before her calliope-like voice can rise in protest, her ferret eyes have read the name, "Louis Vally," upon the trunk. Poking at the leathern sides as she would test a thanksgiving turkey, the good dame mutters *sotto voce*:—"'Pears to me 'tis pretty large,—looks as if the folks told true 'bout the money, and ——" But the sentence is punctuated with a dull thud, as the impatient porter gives the truck a lively jerk, and Mere Brousard finds herself in a bow-knot on the platform. Gathering herself together, a little limp in spirits and in limb, the good Mere joins the body-guard of villagers that have closed about the Vallys, and are escorting them down the principal street of the hamlet to the home of Simon and Marie.

A few hours later, having resisted the kindly invitation of the good curé that the young priest should take up his abode at the presbytery, Marie Vally has ensconced her lad cosily amid the much scrubbed glories of the company bed-room.

Eight years had dealt kindly with the old home, and over all things, *le bon Dieu* had set the fair spirit of Prosperity to keep watch and guard.

In those first sweet days, the subtle intuitions that bloom like wild flowers in the untutored breast, bade the simple folk of the village check their eager curiosity in regard to the newly returned son of the Vallys, and keep aloof, for the nonce, from the home of Simon and Marie. There, in a sacred cloister, built by love, parents and son, brothers and sister lived again the old sweet life. During the absence of Louis, John and Marguerite had both wedded ; and the happy voices of little children are now heard within the home. John has brought his young wife to dwell beneath the old roof-tree. Marguerite has made a home for the husband of her choice in the little hamlet ; but since the return of Louis, has come to dwell in the homestead, in order to be near the beloved priest-brother.

The missionary himself, becomes the lad once more ; the shadows woven by the years of mental and of bodily travail, fall softly from his spirit. With step as light as in the old days, the shepherd boy treads again the morning hills of Lavaudieu, and, his every movement followed by the tearful eyes of Simon, aids in the fragrant labors of the vineyard. With the old, deep love

for the soil drawing him resistlessly, the missionary steals into the golden meadows, painted with the flowers of spring, and lies at full length upon the fragrant sod, the holy spell of nature permeating his being and chaining all his faculties with her invisible bonds.

As the week wears on, and the first enthusiasm of home returning begins to give way to more lively interest in his environment outside the tiny circle of the household, Louis remembers the bulky package of Confederate money given him by Rev. John Baptiste Mouton before leaving America. With this same condemned specie, of which he has already told Marie, mother and son have plotted retaliation upon the unsuspecting groups who prated so boldly of his desertion from the Seminary of Le Puy. Here and there, in a thousand indirect ways, Marie Vally has hinted of the great wealth her missionary son has accumulated in the wonderful land of the setting sun,—land where Cortez and Pizarro found treasures surpassing the riches of Solomon; where nuggets of gold shine like fallen stars in the mysterious valley of the Mississippi, and savage war chiefs deck themselves with necklaces of

pearl which they give to the missionary in exchange for a plug of tobacco. Broad and deep the good mother laid the foundation of the jest that was to ensnare in its wily meshes the folk of Lavaudieu,—the good curé alone excepted, and sworn to secrecy.

All things being ripe, Mere Brousard comes just at the opportune moment. The good woman's curiosity has bubbled and boiled within her since her unceremonious introduction to the missionary's trunk at the depot; it has now reached the running-over point, and the dame *must* lay siege to the home of the Vallys,— or die in the attempt. Her bulky person waddles laboriously to the house, dodging shyly, now and then, into the kindly shade of the vineyard, as the portly form of Marie Vally becomes visible beyond the open windows. Pausing a moment before venturing upon the unshaded lawn in front of the domicile, Mere Brousard nerves herself for the ordeal, and drawing forth a prim little bouquet of spring blossoms, makes ready to fling the offering into the maw of Cerberus. Barely waiting for her knock to be answered, the excited dame wedges herself into the room, and

before Marie Vally can make answer to her greeting, thrusts the bouquet into the hand of her erstwhile enemy.

"I thought you might like a bit of a flower for the table, now that Louis is a priest,"—the portly visitor stops short in her speech, almost gasping with amazement, as, instead of the chilling reception she has anticipated, Marie Vally utters profuse thanks, and with her own hand removes the neighbor's bonnet, and establishes her in the most commodious chair. Dumbfounded, the sharp eyes of Mere Brousard make an inventory of the apartment; suddenly, they fall upon a great heap of Confederate money that has been tossed pell-mell upon the table. Brushing some of the bills carelessly aside to make room for the bouquet which she has set in water, Marie sends a crisp fifty dollar note floating to the feet of her petrified neighbor.

With the reverence of a Buddhist for his idol, Mere Brousard picks the bill up by its edges and hands it slowly to Marie:—"Fif-ty-dollar!" pants the visitor gasping. "Ain't you skeered of burglars, Marie Vally?"

At this moment, Louis, who has watched the

scene from the half-opened door of the next room, enters nonchalantly, and, after giving his blessing to the courtesying villager, proceeds unhesitatingly to light a cigar with a brand-new bill, snatched at random from the table. The china blue eyes of the visitor fairly protrude with astonishment. As though impelled by some extraneous force, her heavy form arises slowly from the chair and leans toward the son of the Vallys. As she does so, Mere Brousard mutters in an awestruck whisper:—"That's money, Louis Vally, *money;* and you a-burning it like that—a-burning it." With the insouciance of a Rothschild, the missionary steps nearer the table—and runs his fingers through the pyramid of bills—"Pish!—it was only a *ten*, good mother; we use 'm for that in the States, they're better than matches, you know."

Carelessly sweeping the Confederate paper from the table, Louis Vally thrusts his bogus wealth into a drawer of the cabinet, and turns unconcernedly to the villager:—"What sweet flowers, Mere Brousard; did you bring them with you?" But Mere Brousard scarcely hears him in her haste to resume shawl and bonnet.

Fairly quivering with eagerness to spread the news of the wondrous things that were enacting at the Vallys, the buxom dame waves aside the protesting Marie, and forgets a twenty years' hobble in her anxiety to reach the village.

By the afternoon, the news has spread like wild-fire. A son of Lavaudieu, the youngest boy of Simon and Marie Vally, a lad whom they reviled, has returned, not only a priest, but a millionaire! No longer attempting to disguise their curiosity, and throwing off all restraint, the villagers set out singly, or in groups to the home of the Vallys. At nightfall every chair in the domicile is occupied, and the folk crowd upon the settees. As in the case of Mere Brousard, every eye is turned to the table where the Confederate money,—the bills having been replaced for the second act of the farce,—lies impassively outspread. Night is falling rapidly, and the lamps must be lighted. Obeying a covert signal from Louis, Marie Vally takes a bill from the pile and repeats the manœuvre of the morning. Again the effect is electrical. The spellbound peasants hold their breath in amazement. As the crisp bill crackles and curls in the flame, the

shrill voice of old Jacques cuts the silence like a buzz-saw :—"Guess we'd better go—Lizette,"—nudging his abstracted better half; "this ain't no place for poor folks." Almost paralyzed with astonishment, the villagers arise simultaneously, and follow the lead. Courtesying, smiling, choking with merriment, Marie Vally stands by the threshold, bidding "*Bon soir*" to her retreating guests. Writhing in throes of long suppressed laughter, Louis Vally beats a hasty retreat to his own apartment, where his now uncontrollable mirth can be confided to the bosom of the bed quilt.

On the following Sabbath, Louis Vally is to sing High Mass in the village church.

The little building is packed to suffocation. Priest and millionaire!—millionaire and priest! according to temperament or grace the words are banded in the hamlet. When have the folk of Lavaudieu seen such a wondrous sight? And on this Sabbath morning, curious spectators, who cannot find room in the overcrowded building, mount the crumbling tombs, and even the blossoming trees of the churchyard. Within, the voice of the young celebrant, vibrant with

power, intones the Preface, and in the hearts of the congregation, the spell of Mammon gives place to the spell of God. Looking upon the face of Louis, pale with excitement, but lit with inspiration from on high, the thoughts of the supposed millionaire fade from the chastened spirits of the peasants. "*Priest*, priest only, priest forever!" exclaims every heart within the multitude.

The voice of Simon Vally is silent at the Credo; leaving his accustomed place in the choir, he goes to the edge of the railing, and, with streaming eyes, leans far over the balustrade in order to behold his son at the mystic moment of the Consecration. Seeing this, the pallor deepens on the brow of the celebrant.

Soon, the Sacrifice is over, and Louis leaves the sanctuary and stations himself upon the steps of the church. Old men and children, youths and maidens, press about him to ask his blessing. Something in the bearing, in the face, in the spirit, of the Vallys' son draws the motley multitude irresistibly to him; truly, "A priest, a priest forever, according to the order of Melchisedek!" Now come Simon and Marie; the

crowd falls back; the sobs of strong men can be heard as the young priest bends low, and reverently touches the heads of his parents.

Issuing from the sacristy, the old curé hands the Vallys' son the immense package of *dragées* bought in Paris for the occasion. The strain of the morning is related, the reaction sets in, the enthusiasm of the peasants is intense. Thick and fast, the sugared shower falls upon the laughing, shouting, scrambling multitude. As it comes, Marie Vally, passing her arm through that of her son walks erectly down the churchyard, smiling benignantly upon the multitude. It is her hour of supreme triumph. The villagers respectfully make way, as though a sovereign was in their midst.

Easter deepens into Whitsuntide. The paschal lilies bloom and perish to bequeath their whiteness to the Pentecostal dove, which broods almost visibly upon the hamlet of Lavaudieu. And now, in the home of the Vallys, the season of keen delight and exultation is succeeded by one of reaction. It is the swing of the pendulum of human destiny; between joy and sorrow, enthusiasm and depression, the human spirit vi-

brates ceaselessly, describing with each rebound, the arc of a larger circle. Inspirations are Protean in form. And borne of the Pentecostal grace, the Spirit of Suffering ministers unto the son of the Vallys. A burning fever, which deepens into pneumonia, seizes upon the missionary. The alarm of the good Simon and Marie is coined into deep tenderness which, like a spring of healing waters, flows ceaselessly upon the heart of their stricken one. Little Louis Vally, the tiny son of John; and Simon, the sturdy offspring of Marguerite, linger constantly about the bedside of the sufferer; and to Marie Vally the years have rolled back, and the American missionary is a little lad once more,—her last born, the child of her predilection. In the solemn watches of the night when the young priest seemed to sleep, the mother would steal into his chamber and kiss, as only mothers can, the fevered brow of her unconscious child.

Out of the mists that hung like shadow veils upon those days of illness, one ghastly spectre seemed to take shape and substance and bring torment to the spirit of the sufferer. Deeper far, than the physical anguish, was the haunting

dread that he would never more return to his American mission; that, ere the time was ripe, his little flock must be folded by another shepherd. But, when the crisis came, the horrid spectre faded from the mental vision of the invalid; the veils were withdrawn from the faces of the days, and May stood like a guardian angel upon his threshold and within his heart.

Arising from his bed, the rejoicing missionary goes forth once more among the people of his youth. In the last sweet days of his sojourn in Lavaudieu, Louis, aided by Simon and John Vally, purchases and presents a processional cross to the little church. It is the desire both of Louis, and of his kinsmen, that when the former shall have returned to his voluntary exile, he will still have a share in the most sacred ceremonies and the dearest festivals of his people.

And ever to those who came in touch with the spirit of the Vallys' son, is the memory thereof associated with the Master's Cross, which, with heart and hand, He bore triumphantly in the consecrated pilgrimage of His life.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE ROCKS OF MASSABIELLE

THE deep love of his heart for his earthly mother having been satisfied and renewed by her dear companionship at Lavaudieu, the spirit of the son of the Vallys turns to the great mother of humanity, the supreme Woman, in whom all maternity finds its sublime prototype and pattern.

Accompanied by his brother John, and joined *en route* by Father Leray (afterward archbishop of New Orleans) the pastor of Meridian sets forth upon the long anticipated journey to the shrine of Lourdes. Passing with reverent tread down the main street of the little hamlet, our pilgrims seek the shelter of the Soubirous tavern, kept by the brother of the youthful Seer, and annexed to the lowly home of the miller Francois, father of the little maiden beloved by the Archmaiden of the Universe. Scarcely pausing to glance at his hallowed environment, our young missionary,

fired with the enthusiasm of a supreme desire, proceeds at once at the royal Basilica and solicits from the custodian the permission to celebrate the great Sacrifice, on the morrow, within its sacred walls. Many applicants are before him, for the sons of the primal Eve gather in countless multitudes around the new; but the Meridian pastor has come from the far off sunset land, and the eagerness of his spirit burns in eye and cheek as he makes his petition and prayerfully awaits the answer. It is the coveted permission; and, thrilled with gladness, Louis Vally returns to the Soubirous hostelry, to pass a night full of sweet anticipations and holy dreams. Before the dawn begins to lift her virgin brow upon the East, our missionary, with emotions akin to those of the little shepherd maid of Bartres during the wondrous quinzaine, goes silently forth to the glorious Church, his soul consumed by desire purer than the awakening day, and stronger than the sun-ray to kindle life and light upon the sleeping world. High upon the crests of the rocks of Massabielle, the eternal granite forming an indestructible foundation, the inviolate peaks lifting their

imperishable battlements on high, like the Temple of Mount Zion, stands the superb Basilica,—called forth by the word of the mighty Virgin and set as the Ark of the Covenant at the gateway of the Pyrenees. Within, the semi-darkness of the royal fane is starred by a thousand waxen lights, and the holy hour that precedes dawn, is quick with prayer breathed from the souls of the absorbed worshipers. The atmosphere tingles with subtle power, the very air is charged with grace. Though the clock of the Basilica has not yet tolled four, the presence of a vast multitude is sensibly felt, and the temple throbs with the pregnant silence that arises like a mystic exhalation wherever a great congregation of believers is assembled. The intense spiritual activity becomes almost palpable to the senses.

In the innumerable army of worshipers that assembles at Lourdes, clad in every garb worn by the children of men between the rising and setting sun, speaking every tongue known to the seed of Adam, all earthly titles are insignificant, all privileges merged and exalted into the common birthright of sons and daughters of the

Queen of Heaven, each of whom bears, as mystic sign and symbol, the great Rosary of the pilgrim.

From midnight until noon, all the forty-five altars of the triple church are occupied by celebrants, and the blood of the Lamb flows in an uninterrupted stream. As Louis Vally vests himself for the Sacrifice, a venerable figure emerges from the shade of the clustered columns, and humbly approaching him, begs, with the tone and manner of a little child, to be allowed the privilege of serving his Mass. In the fitful candle-light, the glittering insignia of military rank is observed by the Meridian pastor. Glancing keenly at his remarkable supplicant, Louis Vally beholds the erect bearing, the imposing mien of the stranger. A face glorified by thought, a brow marked by power and the habit of command. Since midnight, the unknown, at whose beck proud legions move, has kept watch in the basilica, longing, waiting, for the coveted opportunity of becoming an acolyte at one of the innumerable Masses. Up to this moment, others have anticipated him, now his chance has come. A flash of joy lights the stern features, as Louis

Vally gratefully accepts his services; and with an immeasurable reverence, in comparison with which that of the humble recruit for his commander-in-chief is as nothing, the illustrious incognito serves the son of the peasants, Simon and Marie.

And to the spirit and mind of Louis Vally comes another of those crises, which, in passing over the human soul, leave thereon an indelible stigma. The resistless significance of the scene, the place, the hour, the almost tangible presence of supernatural power, seem for one supreme moment to merge faith into vision, and to flash upon the consciousness of the Vallys' son, as on that of Elijah, a bewildering glimpse of the *Truth that is.*

Outside, the first faint sunbeam, like a tender thought of God, touches the mystic grotto, paling the countless lights within to sleeping stars, and kindling the miraculous spring to limpid opal. The subtle atmosphere of Heaven that pervades the triple church, becomes ever more palpable in the heart of the solemn rock where virgin feet have left the footprints of virginity.

Visible prophecy of the rally of humanity

about the Lamb, when the sunrise splendors of the Millennial Sabbath shall have opened beyond the holy Mount of Prayer, is this dense and silent multitude kneeling within the fane of Massabielle, every passion chained by worship, every faculty locked in prayer.

Flushed by the powerful emotions of the preceding hours, Louis Vally lifts his forehead gratefully to receive the cool touch of the dawn, which seems not unlike the hand of the invisible Virgin, beckoning him gently onward as he approaches her shrine. Soon, the divine serenity of the place permeates his being. Growing gradually calmer, the young missionary draws near the holy spring and drinks deeply of the living waters. It is upon this spot that the countless pilgrims are accustomed to utter their requests to the wonderful Maiden whose virginal might has given the power of healing to the stream. Drawing him from the far-off state of Mississippi to its font of unmeasurable love; across the troubled seas of sorrow, of spiritual depression, and the vast Atlantic waste, the rock of Massabielle has called to the spirit of the pastor of Meridian, though Louis Vally has no bodily ill to be healed

in the Spring of Springs. But even as the hart panteth for the crystal stream, his soul panteth for the tide of grace that flows from the "Vas Spiritualis."

Since the all-compelling Word brought forth the world from Chaos, and bade the forests lift up their royal heads, the sea unfurl its immensity, the granite cliffs stand like archangelic sentinels, the sublime manifestations of spiritual life and power have ever been made in the virgin solitudes of nature. Gennesareth, Tabor, Horeb, Sinai and in the nineteenth century of the Christian era, the rugged grandeur of the rocks of Massabielle, became the tabernacles wherein the eternal Spirit brooded. And the basilica that crowns the *petros* by the cave, is the visible emblem of the Invisible Church, whose foundations are laid in the heart of the Rock of Ages.

Kneeling by the limpid waters of the grotto, Louis Vally utters the request he has told to the Sisters of Mercy:—"O! wonderful Virgin, I have no bodily ailment of which to ask the cure, but grant that I may become strong as a pine knot, in order that I may return and build a church and convent in my distant American mission."

All the beautiful day, forever blessed in the memory of the Vallys' son, not a cloud obscures the dazzling azure of the heavens; it is as though the mystic blue of the Virgin's cincture was outspread upon the atmosphere. Within the little tavern, bluff John Siberous, sturdy son of his peasant race, aids in the preparation of the mid-day meal about to be served in the rustic arbor of the hostelry. Like the odor of a hidden flower, the simple, sweet environment and its memories full of grace,—memories of the little shepherd lass who trod the courtyard in her coarse sabots and snowy capulet, with patches upon her gown and ecstasy upon her spirit, make the hours of sunlight fly, like the birds of paradise, to rest them within the holy solitude of the Angelus. Soon they come,—the golden notes, and "All the hour is sweet with prayer." The sun, having run its triumphant course, spreads its burnished wings like a colossal phœnix, and consuming itself in its own fires, dissolves upon the West, leaving a storm of blazing sparks upon the horizon. As though reflecting some vast conflagration, the entire heavens send back an answering glow, and all the atmosphere is tinged with rose.

In this light and at this hour, the entire population of Lourdes and the mighty caravan of pilgrims form one great procession to the grotto where the "*Rosa Mystica*" blooms invisibly.

A temporary altar is swiftly erected beneath the crimson skies, and the universe seems flushed with wonder and with expectation. The solemn benediction proceeds; the voices of numberless worshipers blend in a mighty volume of sound that beats like the waves of a finite ocean upon the shores of the infinite. Suddenly, above the tremendous harmony, a clear, girlish voice infused with supernatural power, rises pure as crystal, strong as light:—"*Cured! Sancta Maria! I can walk!*" An electric thrill passes through the multitude; here and there a voice proclaims the glorious tidings;—"A miracle! a miracle!" But it is soon merged in the magnificent chant that is entoned with nobler volume, with renewed devotion, with finer enthusiasm by the burning spirits of the worshipers. Not a pilgrim stirs prematurely from his place, not a human being in the vast congregation rushes forward to the spot where heaven's latest wonder has been wrought; until the Sacred Host has been raised,

and the multitude has prostrated as one man. Verily the hour has become a Tabor, and the eyes of the pilgrims are about to behold the unveiled glory of the Lord.

Scarcely had the last note of the psalm that follows the benediction faded into silence, when the multitude surges into the grotto, as closely as possible pressing to the rocks of Massabielle. There kneeling by the spring, unsupported is a young paralytic, whom many beheld during the early hours of the day, in an invalid-chair wheeled by her devoted father.

Springing lightly to her feet, as the pilgrims press around her, the girl exclaims once more,—"See! I am cured. I can walk—Our Lady has healed me."

The following morning, the little maiden walked unassisted and triumphant, into the basilica, before the eyes of the assembled multitude.

Guided by the invisible power that fashions human destinies, through the press of the enormous throng, Father Vally obtains a place immediately in front of the grotto, and beholds the stupendous drama of the maiden's cure. It is as though the ages were rolled back, and the Man

of Galilee moved once more among the people, speaking again the mighty word that made the infirm whole, and called the mouldering dead from the marble portal of the tomb. An almost overwhelming sense of being environed, permeated and controlled by supreme force is felt by the young missionary. Omnipotence becomes tangible. Deity manifests itself to the senses, and the sublime gospel of the hour gives deeper insight to the spirit of Louis Vally and to the spirits of many in the awestruck multitude. As though the veil before Eternal Wisdom for the moment was cleft in twain, one ray of uncreated truth falls like pentecostal flame upon the souls of the believers, and the brooding spirit seems to whisper unto each, "The strength of the Lord is immutable." "He shall ever be mindful of His covenant: He shall show forth unto His people the power of His works." And in every generation of the human race, from the primeval age, when the citizens of paradise walked visibly with man beneath the Tree of Life, has the Divine Energy suspended as well as sustained the natural law: and until the final day when all matter will be merged in spirit, supreme power will

manifest itself unto humanity, and the divine events that men call "miracles" be enacted in their midst.

With a great silence upon heart and spirit, Louis Vally leaves the holy spot, all his being hushed with the deep awe that subdued the soul of Moses as he stood before the Burning Bush. From the mighty inspirations of the scene, the thoughts of our missionary turn with swift transition to the beloved members of his distant flock. In this, his day of grace, and of illumination, Louis Vally, under all circumstances the shepherd, is mindful, as in his hours of suffering, of the people of his predilection. And the shepherd draws the Living Waters for his fold. For, after a night of calm has succeeded the tremendous events of the day, the first action of the son of the Vallys is to obtain an abundance of the sacred water for distribution in his American mission.

Another wonderful day is spent beneath the shadows of the rocks of Massabielle; the celestial drama repeats itself, painting each scene with living colors on the soul of the pastor of Meridian. Upon the evening of the third day, as the

setting sun weaves a magnificent halo above the mighty basilica, turning the rock to purest gold, flooding the rustic shrine with a resembling glory, the wondrous light that emanated from the Celestial Beauty seen by Bernadette, our American missionaries bid adieu to Lourdes. And the stars that wake upon the tender twilight, are not brighter than the stars of faith and hope and love that glow within their spirits.

Rev. Mother de Sales Browne, 1877.

## CHAPTER XVII

### SOLDIERS OF SACRIFICE

FROM the shrine within the grotto to the holy altar of his home the son of the Vallys returns to tarry a brief span beside his parents' hearthstone.

Within the far-off American mission, the hand of duty lifts her sacred torch on high, and passing over land and sea, the light thereof sheds luminance upon the soul of the pastor of Meridian.

With the supreme love that merges itself in the object beloved, the hearts of the simple peasants, Simon and Marie Vally, have become transfigured, and their affectionate adieus to the child of their predilection, are marked by sublime fortitude. With the poet-priest of Southland, parents and son well may exclaim:

> "Adieu! it is the word for us;
> Yes, more than sound, 'tis prayer,
> They do not part who do part thus,
> For God is everywhere."

As Simon Vally clasps his youngest son unto his

heart, does the shadow of the angel Azrael fall between them? While the pastor of Meridian makes his short sojourn in his native village, Father Blanc, his *companion du voyage*, proceeds to his own home to say, like Louis Vally, the last adieus.

Accompanied once more by his brother John, Father Vally rejoins Florimond Blanc in Paris. As upon their arrival in France, a few days are spent in the capital, by the American missionaries. With the tiny treasure contributed by his beloved flock, Louis Vally purchased the beautiful vestments for his little church. And a crown for the Virgin Mother, which, upon his return, he showed to all visitors at the presbytery, with the pride of an emperor displaying his royal jewels. The poor, worn missionary vestments can now be discarded and the superb regalia of the Roman Catholic assumed; for the palace of the King no fabric is too exquisite, no gold too pure, no gem too rare. Parting from John Vally at Havre, the missionaries committed themselves once more to the variant moods of the Atlantic; but ever, in storm or calm, the "Star of the Ocean" led them on. And so, without incident, *en voyage*,

the two sons of France found themselves within the harbor of New York, some ten days after sailing;—missionaries indeed, and exiles once more.

Less than forty-eight hours later, the wizard locomotive, annihilating the vast expanse of country between New York and Mississippi, Father Blanc bids adieu to Father Vally at Aberdeen, and the Meridian pastor proceeds alone to his Mississippi presbytery. While he gathered spiritual immortelles amid old world shrines and the scenes of his childhood and youth, the sweet flowers of his planting within the little mission, exhale an ever increasing fragrance. From far and wide, the children began to flock to the rustic academy domiciled in St. Patrick's Hall. Israelites as well as Christians desired to place their little ones under the uplifting influence of the devoted pastor. The limited accommodations of the rustic schoolhouse begin to be inadequate; and to meet the new conditions, Louis Vally turns again to the God-infused inspirations that were never known to fail him. Deep in his spirit during all the years of his ministry, has lived, like a hidden flower, the strong

desire to enlist in his life-work the cooperation of those dauntless "rough riders" of the King, who minister to human society under the significant title of "Sisters of Mercy." Foremost always in the army of the Master, hewing with indomitable spirits and the sword of renunciation, a pathway for the Hosts of the Lord, these valiant women are the Judiths of civilization, and with their fragile arms nerved by Jehovah, give the death-blow to ignorance and raise the milk-white standard of the Lamb upon the palisades of suffering and crime. Pioneers by predilection and the letters patent of the Eternal Spirit, the vast standing army of the soldiers of sacrifice marshals its silent battalions beneath the humble roofs of convent and academy in time of civil peace; and in seasons of war or scourges, marches forth and constitutes the advance guard of the Master's legions in the terrible struggle with death and destitution. Such are the recruits that our missionary determines to call to his aid. But in doing so, the shepherd stands, for the first time in his ministry, apart from, if not actually against, his little flock. With justifiable prudence, the members of the congregation look

aghast upon the seemingly reckless impetuosity of their leader. While some degree of material prosperity has come to them during the period that has elapsed since the opening of the mission, the means and generosity of all have been strained to meet the increasing demands of the struggling congregation. Hence, at the mere idea of the additional outlay involved in the support of a religious community, many candidly protest, and all recoil. While his little congregation stand aloof, the zealous pastor, in nowise daunted, turns once more the golden key of prayer in the uncreated treasure house of the King. Imperishable riches lie within; jewels rarer than Golconda's gems, gold more pure than that of Ophir. Drawing thence inexhaustible riches, Louis Vally proceeds calmly with his undertaking. He will begin the convent of Meridian with the same material that Teresa of Spain used in many of her foundations. Upon a corner stone of immutable faith, a substantial superstructure will inevitably rise; and firmly, upon the Rock of Ages, his house will stand against the storm. To think is to act, with the son of Simon and Marie, and a letter is sent at once to

the superioress of St. Xavier's Convent at Vicksburg, the mother-house of the Sisters of Mercy in the state of Mississippi, earnestly requesting her to send him some members of her community to open a convent and take charge of the school now urgently in need of a regular corps of teachers. Notwithstanding the gravity of the circumstances, the irrepressible wit of the missionary flashes forth at the end of the epistle. "I have everything but the house, Reverend Mother." With a heroism that matches his own, the superioress makes answer: "My daughters shall come whenever you are ready to receive them." A goodly tract of pine land belongs to the little demesne of the Church. And with this bit of solid earth beneath his project, Louis Vally turns to the consideration of the dwelling that must arise upon it out of nothingness, like the famed palace of Aladdin in the Arabian Nights. Now, it chanced about that time, by one of those (ordained) accidents that shape the lives of men, that Messrs. Marks, Litchenstuns, merchants, having, in the course of commercial evolution, abandoned their old store on Front Street, for the stately proportions of a new building upon

Twenty-third Avenue, offered the first mentioned habitat for sale, at a figure that would tempt the impecunious. The young missionary saw his opportunity, and purchased the erstwhile dry-goods emporium after the fashion in which the weekly newspapers give us romances. But to transport a two-story building over some fourteen squares of uneven ground, was an enigma that discounted the problems of Euclid. Nevertheless, the undaunted pastor stands his ground. And solving the riddle *a la Pater Familias* and the bundle of sticks, forthwith directs the embryo convent to be taken apart, and hauled piecemeal to its present site near the presbytery. So vital a move of the castle having been made upon the chess-board, Louis Vally indites another letter to the Mother Superioress at Vicksburg, asking the immediate fulfilment of her promise to send him the Sisters.

Not dreaming that she would be so soon called upon to redeem her pledge, and filled with amazement at the suddenness with which preparations for their reception had been made, Reverend Mother de Sales appoints the little band of pioneers. Sister Mary Camillus Callis,

Sister Mary Bernard McGuire, a white novice, and Sister Mary Germaine Martin, composed the heroic trio, to be led eastward by Sister Vincent Browne, the beloved superioress of the Jackson, Mississippi convent, from which she was recalled for the purpose.

Reverend Mother de Sales was a veteran campaigner. She had ministered to the soldiers during the whole four years' struggle, and healed many a wound made by Union bullets. No officer that served in the army of Robert Lee was more devoted to the "Conquered Banner," or endured more for the cause of the Confederacy. Strengthened by trial, and nourished upon sacrifice, the spirit of this noble woman thrilled responsively to the enthusiasm of the missionary; while her intellect, with faultless acumen, grasped at once the tremendous difficulties, the extreme privations, to which her little band of pioneers would be subject in the Meridian mission. Gathering them around her as they were about to depart, the noble superioress remarked, her voice husky with emotion:—"Heaven will richly reward all of you who go out to the aid of this zealous missionary; and so far as your ma-

terial wants are concerned, you will ever find in the 'Little Father' a devoted friend who will share with you his last loaf."

The afternoon of September 18, 1877, succeeded one of those sombre days that come, anon, amid the gold and crimson splendors of the fall, when Autumn draws a mourning mantle over her regal robes, and weeps, like Esther, for the departed glory of her woodland kindred.

In the fields, the uncouth stubble, blasted by the early frost, stands lank and sinister. A blight has fallen upon the royal forests, soaked with the ever descending rain. The brilliant robe of the sumac, proud cardinal of the Southern woods, looks dull in the universal gray of sky and atmosphere. Heaven seems to withdraw its guardianship from earth, and all nature weeps as a new made orphan.

Night is closing prematurely in, and a penetrating drizzle oozes through the windows of the car, as the train bearing our four pioneers glides into the Meridian station. While the pullman is yet in motion, Louis Vally, mingling with the hotel porters, springs on board, and catching sight of the "Sisters of Mercy," exclaims in the

orthodox twang of the professional cabman:—"This way to the poorhouse!" Catching his humor, the Sisters answer with merry smiles, and the request, "We wish to be conducted to St. Aloysius' Academy" (the name previously decided upon for the embryo institution). "I am the porter of that establishment," replies the missionary; and, aided by Father Vigue, who has accompanied him to the depot, seizes the Sisters' valises before the astonished travelers can remonstrate. Leaving their baggage to the care of the self-constituted valets, our pioneers are driven to their future home,—the discarded headquarters of the big dry-goods merchants. Somewhat bashful, because of being forced to play so novel a part, the battered frame building stood, like a great, overgrown child that is made to say a speech; the shutterless windows staring like wide-opened eyes, and its swollen front door, guiltless of steps, stretched like a gaping mouth in sheer astonishment.

Beyond the threshold, however, Mrs. Scully, the reception committee of one, receives the daughters of Catherine Mac-Auley, with a Celtic embrace, and leads them into the little refectory

where a comfortable supper has been spread. Meanwhile, the ecclesiastical porters arrive upon the scene, and their histrionic ability is once more called into play. With a power of impersonation that would have done credit to an Irving or Mansfield, the two missionaries transform themselves into butlers, and serve the bewildered nuns during their inaugural repast. The banquet at an end, the faculty of the prospective academy are about to leave the refectory to make a tour of the new institution of learning, when Louis Vally steps quickly before them, his whole manner transformed, his countenance aglow with gratitude and the deep solemnity of the moment. Instantly, the mood of the party is changed. The supreme import of their undertaking thrills and glorifies the spirit of each. Soldiers of sacrifice indeed, they are about to furl their tents and march at the sound of the *reveille* of the King. Around them, in the ambuscades of fallacy and deceit, on the hills of human pride and power, on the watch-towers of bigotry and hatred, behind the breastworks of evil, and the battlements of ignorance and disorder, the enemy are waiting, sleepless and

vigilant. With a common impulse our pioneers fall upon their knees, and the pastor of Meridian imparts his solemn benediction.

Exhausted by the fatigues and excitement of their journey, the daughters of Catherine MacAuley sleep dreamlessly that night. From dawn of the day before until sunset, an incessant drizzle had fallen; and from dusk until dawn, the inexorable rain continued. The land immediately around the new convent having been disturbed in the process of moving the building, the freshly turned earth greedily sucks in the rain, and becomes speedily transformed into an almost impassible bog. Above this black morass, the leaden skies frown relentlessly, as our pioneers awake the first morning in their new environment. The spirit of dampness has taken possession of all things. The building, shaken violently in its joints by the rough pilgrimage from Front Street, fairly reeks with moisture. Rain dribbles in at the shutterless windows, oozes from the plastering, and drops with maddening regularity, down the chimneys; a clammy sweat exudes from walls and furniture. In the culinary department, the rain has poured

all night into the stove, and the scanty breakfast of our soldiers of sacrifice must be taken cold after the manner of hardy campaigners. Almost as cut off from the outside world as though on some desert island, by the deplorable condition of the roads, the new faculty of "St. Aloysius' Academy" finds itself in a state of blockade. Hour after hour passes slowly by: another reeking day deepens into cheerless night, another and another, and still the inhabitants of the "academy" are stormbound in their stronghold, locked therein by the evil genii of the mud. During this doleful siege waged upon them by the elements, only the intrepid missionary, and sturdy Mrs. Scully, clad in her "gude manne's" boots, venture to brave the treacherous quagmire. The four chairs belonging to the establishment have been moved in all directions, beating discreet retreat before the encroaching leaks. The dry-goods boxes in the commissary, that do duty for tables (the same being the handiwork of our missionary), grow damp in sympathy with their environment, and plates and platters slide jocosely from the fingers of the pioneers. The countless army of the raindrops lays siege to

the citadel of our soldiers; it has taken the outer ramparts, and invaded the courtyard, but the inner chambers remain inviolate. Deep within the souls of the daughters of Catherine Mac-Auley the sun of faith is shining. Tempests may beat upon the temple of the body, but no storm can touch the calm within. And so, with jest and banter and all-compelling prayer, the leaden days are turned to bright. The sombre clouds that have saddened the heart of Louis Vally because of the cheerless installation of our volunteers, are scattered by the cheery voices that may be heard within the convent. As our soldiers assemble in the bleak community room, their anxious captain steals noiselessly into the soaking basement of the academy, and listens intently for some sound that will assure him that his recruits have not lost courage, or regretted the heroic sacrifice made in coming to his aid.

From some unknown source, toilet articles and promiscuous pieces of furniture begin to find their way to the besieged; at which the soldiers wonder greatly; but, one day, while seated at their own table the mystery is solved. Popping her bandannaed head into the refectory, Aunt

Lucy, the sable recruit of the presbytery, unceremoniously exclaims with the suddenness and vehemence of a catapult:—"Y' all got Father Vally's spoons!" A bombshell exploded within the barracks of the besieged, could not have startled our soldiers more effectually. Springing involuntarily from their chairs, in sheer astonishment at the doughty blockade runner, the truant spoons within their hands fall with a clang upon the table. Seeing this, the indomitable African pushes her portly person against the swollen door, wriggles into the mess room with the facility of a jack-rabbit, and, before the astonished pioneers can remonstrate, rakes the coveted utensils into her apron, firing, meanwhile, a fusilade of accusation;—"Y' all got Father Vally's tubs, and Father Vally's cheers, and Father Vally's kettles, an' I gwine to hav' 'em, or I ain' done come from So'th Ca'lina!" And having thus delivered herself, the sable member of the firm of "I and Father Vally," makes a raid with an expedition that would have given points to the followers of Napoleon. Limp with amazement, merriment and incipient indignation, our pioneers look on helpless and

unprotesting; and when Aunt Lucy beats a retreat, the soldiers fall in line and march to the oratory, where they make a meditation upon the locust plague of Egypt!

That night, the inmates of the barrack had restless slumber. Sundry mysterious thumps punctuated their dreams, and uncanny footsteps were heard on the lower floor. It was as though all the spirits of the storm had entered through the accommodating cracks, and were inaugurating Walpurgis below. Next morning, the crestfallen pioneers descended to the commissary prepared to stand on the places where the chairs ought to have been; but presto! every article carried off by the sable marauder the day before had been mysteriously returned during the hours of darkness. And the sun came out to enjoy the joke, and the earthly sun was followed by the Primal Source of light, the Sun of Justice shone on the altar brought to Meridian by the pioneers, and the great Sacrifice was celebrated for the first time in the tiny chapel of the academy. With the King Himself at the head of their forces, the intrepid band could march fearlessly onward.

The sunlit days that preceded the Sabbath,

brought some of the kindly folk of the village to greet the daughters of Catherine Mac-Auley. And on the beautiful Sabbath itself,—one of those royal days, when Indian Summer, like a gypsy queen, seems to hold her court within the forest, High Mass was sung in the Meridian church, and the magnificent *Te Deum* chanted by the heart and voice and spirit of the young missionary, and his assistant, Father Vigue, who was still the guest of the presbytery. After the solemn service, the little ones of the congregation gathered around the intrepid volunteers and one of their number, a graceful maid of thirteen summers, voicing the loving greetings of all, stood upon the front steps of the church, and extended a heartfelt welcome to the women henceforth to be the guides and teachers of their youth.

The world awakens, once more, to its labor after the Sabbath rest, and the doors of St. Aloysius' Academy, and the hearts of its faculty are opened to the tiny citizens of the Kingdom. It is the Feast of Our Lady of Mercy, the patroness of the order, and the banner of the Queen unfurls its holy blue within the little schoolroom. The only desk,—that formerly

possessed by Miss Murdock, is drawn for by the faculty of the embryo academy. One of them must work minus this adjunct, in the simple way that the Great Teacher spake unto the multitude of Judea,—without pulpit or rostrum, the words of peace and power. The sun, as if trying to compensate for his previous sullenness, shines with unusual brilliancy. Cool, fragrant air laden with the breath of "sweet olive" finds its way through the open windows of the new institution giving freshness to the body, as the vital breath of the Supreme Spirit breathes over the spirit of the teachers, infusing therein new energy and inspirations. Through the now wide open door, the fleckless sky shines like a block of lapis-lazuli. Anon, the gaze of both teacher and pupils wanders to the beautiful world without. Not upon the glittering landscape, however, but upon the little gate of the presbytery their anxious looks are directed; for the zealous missionary, the leading spirit of the new movement, the *raison d'etre* of the infant academy, the inaugurator and sustainer of St. Patrick's School, fails to appear among the children of his predilection! As the golden hours wear on to

twilight, and twilight passes with noiseless tread to make way for the glorious star-jewelled night, the Sisters can no longer suppress their increasing anxiety in behalf of the missionary. Going, half fearfully, to the little presbytery, their hearts oppressed with dread that some sudden ill might have overtaken the pastor, the pioneers are greeted at the door by the ex-marauder. "I an' Father Vally not 'ceivin' to-night," jerkily announces the sable janitress, sturdily refusing to open the door further than a crack. "And why is Father Vally not receiving, auntie?" ventured our most intrepid soldier,—her solicitude deepening for the missionary's welfare nerving her to face the enemy. "*Why* is Father Vally not receiving? He has not been near us all day ——" But the impatience of the South Carolinian cannot wait to hear the rest of the sentence. "*I* and Father Vally *not* receiving 'cause he done gone away!" "Gone away!" repeated the daughters of Catherine Mac-Auley, "gone away!" "Yes, gone away;" reiterates the invincible Abigail; "yes, gone away. Ain't there cyars enough to travel on? an' don't the cyars go to Bay St. Louis? an' ain't

Father Vally gone to Bay St. Louis to take Mars' Peter Higgins' boys to Santa Claus College?" (St. Stanislaus.)

Father Vally gone to Bay St. Louis! Dumbfounded, the sisters gaze upon each other. Here is a baffling enigma! Louis Vally gone to Bay St. Louis! on this day of all days! The day of his prayers, of his longings, of his anticipation, of his triumph! Louis Vally the mainspring of the undertaking, the cause of their leaving the mother house in Vicksburg, for the numberless hardships of the Meridian mission! Still mute with astonishment, our soldiers return, disheartened, to the academy. The captain has seemingly deserted the field in the moment of victory. Amazed, disappointed, depressed, the pioneers had little sleep during the night that followed their visit to the rectory. Late on the evening of the morrow—a day of gloomy skies unrelieved by the sunny presence of the missionary, and of spirits made heavy by his unaccountable absence, the sorely puzzled daughters of Catherine Mac-Auley were assembled in the community room when their truant captain, wilted, crestfallen, and a trifle shy, made his sud-

den appearance in their midst. Before the storm of questions had lulled, Louis Vally, walking to the middle of the room, with the look and tone of an urchin who has played "hookey," but is brave enough to own up to it, almost petrified the pioneers by the statement:—"To tell you the truth, Sisters, I ran away, the long and the short of it, I ran away. I couldn't face the music. It seized me suddenly, the terror—yes, actual terror—and it shook me like the ague. I was panic-stricken by the fear that after all of our toils and privations, and longings, the people wouldn't send their children to the school, for I had stood against them. It was too much for human nature. My own disappointment I could bear,—but yours! I ran away, but I've come back again, we'll see the academy permanently established, or we'll know the reason why." After all, he was only off on furlough, signed and sealed by the Divine Commander-in-chief. It was one of those periods of mental reaction to which great souls are peculiarly liable, and which bind them more closely to the heart of humanity, by the strong, though invisible cords of Adam.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE ANGEL AZRAEL

A GRAY note mingles with the yellow light of the fall of 1878, darkening its topaz glory. Is it a shadow cast by the brooding wings of some nameless sorrow,—the gloom that falls from some intangible but awful Presence? One day, as the red sun gold of October rolls a glowing carpet down the forest aisles, and the country roads that thread the woodland, the Spirit of Death moves silently through the glittering ways, and unveils her awful countenance in the Meridian mission.

The people look upon her but know her not.

Again, the people look upon her, and from out the past dread memories come forth, and the people know the Spirit.

A great fear comes upon them. From the length and breadth of the hamlet is heard the voice of lamentation.

But the Spirit remains in their midst, immovable, inexorable.

For a time the naked hearts of the people beat upon the heart of the terrible stranger in wild protest, in incoherent pleading;—now reading their doom in the stern, sealed look of the Spirit's countenance, the people in one mad moment of human terror, flee, panic-stricken from the face of the visitant.

For a few stormy days, days of mental stress and travail, the inhabitants of the little hamlet surge hither and thither. The October gold seems turned to lead; and the gold within human nature, transformed into dross.

"Life! life only!" is the cry of the tempestuous hearts. "Give us life, human life, at any cost;—the life to which earth and air and fire and sea must minister. Let us live, if we live only to suffer!"

And the Presence in their midst, the Death Angel, speaks with pale, beautiful lips: "Deluded earth-sons, children of the dust and seekers of phantoms, behold! I offer you *life*, and you seek its shadow. I offer you Truth,—you chase its phantom;—I offer you Eternity, you cling to time!"

And through all the wailing and the desolation, the Spirit stood immovable.

And the people fled; old men and children, mothers bearing suckling babes; strong men, wild eyed with fear; young maidens, unkempt, disheveled, hunted down by supreme terror of the yellow death, like fawns by a bloodhound. In long, fantastic procession they fled to the little station; the outgoing passenger trains were gorged with humanity; men wrestled like gladiators for places upon freight and baggage cars. The newly inaugurated academy in session at noon with its full quota of pupils, was deserted by evening. Before nightfall of the third day of the stranger's presence, a pall of silence was drawn over the little village. Only here and there, as the twilight trod tenderly, fearing that even her muffled footsteps would waken some fevered sleeper, the weird wails of household animals, abandoned in the sudden exodus, sent hurried discord through the darkness.

Not in Meridian alone, but through the whole stricken South,—gathering the aftermath of human lives left by the demon of battle, the Death Spirit had passed; her strong right hand armed,

not with torch, or steel, but with the fearful fever,—the loathsome yellow viper of the Gulf States, more detestible, more insidious than the venom of the cobra. Again, as in the awful years of war, the voice of Rachel is heard lamenting for her sons. Intoxicated by that strong hasheesh, the instinct of self-preservation, —kinsman has abandoned kinsman, friend has forgotten friend, child has deserted parent, husband has parted from wife. The flock of the young missionary is scattered by the savage fen wolf of fear, and the soul of the Vallys' son has gone down once more into the dark vale of despondency, into which all sensitive spirits must descend anon. His poor are abandoned, his little ones drift hither and thither; within the tiny sanctuary there are none to hear the voice of the King; and,—more deplorable than all, the sick, the dying, have no one to minister unto them. Here and there along the dreary streets, are houses with doors and gates nailed up and barricaded, their tenants having fled in the wild exodus that first morning of the Spirit's presence in the mission. At intervals, a haggard face, aged by terror, peers between the partly opened

shutters, closing them to with brutal haste as a pedestrian passes outside, for very fear that the stranger may communicate the yellow plague. Even the gentle force of charity seems powerless to make entrance into such hearts and homes. Anon, a dim light betokens the presence of a sleepless sufferer. Occasionally, a swaying figure, newly stricken by the fever, brushes against the pastor in the semi-darkness of the night,—a darkness made lurid at intervals by the forked tongues of the bonfires, the eerie lights of burning disinfectants, and through all, the pungent, penetrating odor of coal tar. Huge teams groan beneath their burden of ominous-looking boxes bearing the gruesome tenants thereof to the little cemetery, now gorged, like a ghoul, upon a feast of corruption. Sometimes an opened window woos the midnight air to the breast of the dying. Here, glazing eyes burn with the light eternal,—death is quenched in life, the shadows flee before the sun. There, eyes are freezing with the nameless dread that sees only death, feels only death, within, around. By such bedsides, Louis Vally, drawing his surplice over his eyes sobs as only strong men can sob. Through

scenes like these, the missionary moves day and night, for he must be continually vigilant, ever in readiness to perform his sacred duties.

As the stars come out in the dark, so the light of strong and beautiful character shines brightly in an environment of gloom. Amid the shadows of egotism and the night of human terror that closes in upon his little mission, the golden nature of the Vallys' son asserts itself; and so it comes to pass, that he is called by the people "The sunshine of the streets of Meridian." Thus the heavy days move on, the little hamlet becomes a charnel house; the peculiar, loathsome odor exhaled by the yellow plague, breathes pollution upon the warm, languorous air, from the purifying frost spirits shrink far back into the chaste womb of the northern ice. Day and night, ghastly, stiffened forms,—the rotting husks that clothed immortal spirits, stare into vacancy and are hustled into a common gaping grave, before the afterglow of life is frozen by the supreme cold of the universe.

The daughters of Catherine Mac-Auley come forth from their habitation, and the black veiled Sisterhood are the only women seen upon the

deserted streets. Hourly, the desolation deepens; but the stern and terrible visitant stands in the midst of the people, immovable, inexorable. Somewhere, infinite darkness in the starless night of spiritual and of mental desolation, the foul wings of despair unfurl, shedding upon the souls of the people a still more terrible gloom. Deeper and deeper its harpy-like talons are thrust into the hearts of the sufferers, the unclean fangs inflicting loathsome wounds therein. Even the strong spirit of our missionary wavers for an awful instant, then, leans more heavily upon the heart of the Christ. It is in such crucial moments that the King works. When every human hand is powerless, when every human strategy is spoiled, the Master speaks: and out of chaos is born the light. And so, at the mandate of the King, material help comes to the stricken community from the great philanthropist Howard, unto whose spirit the Most High has given the accolade of knighthood. The tortured hearts of His people, the Sovereign must touch with His own right hand. And lo! the Invisible moves in their midst, the Friend of Lazarus, the widow of Nain, of Jairus and his

little maid. And the Spirit that stilled the Sea of Galilee calms the deep ocean of the people's anguish. When the sorrowful heart of Louis Vally knows that aid is at hand for the little community, a new and wonderful energy thrills through the spirit, and the body of him, recharging his entire nature with power and courage; the whole man is recreated. The oppressive dread that crushed his spirit to the dust, was the burden of his people's woe, not fear for his own possible doom, though to the foreigner, the Frenchman, the yellow monster of the Gulf States is a morbidly dreaded foe.

A local branch of the "Howard Association" is formed, and the son of the Vallys becomes one of its most active members. Daily, in his own person, he embodies the sweet cognomen "Meridian sunshine," bestowed upon him at this period, by the stricken inhabitants of the little town. Hourly, momently, he brings sunshine to the spirits and to the hearts of the suffering. As the weeks wear on, the baleful power of the fearful visitant inoculates the entire community with venom. Not a home remains uninfected,—the convent of Mercy and the little presbytery

alone excepted. Within the latter, Aunt Lucy, the sable aide-de-camp of the missionary, stays sturdily on. "Yaller fever is white folks' disease—can't cotch niggers, kase dey black, an' 'twouldn't show on 'em." And so Aunt Lucy stays on, and rings the bell of the little church at Angelus time—the only bell that sounds in the village during the leaden-footed days of that ghastly autumn.

"It tell de fokes dey gwine to hebben," Aunt Lucy is wont to exclaim. And as the call to prayer sounds through the vale, the baleful, olive-scented atmosphere, many a loosened soul floats out into eternity, mingling, like the voice of the bell, with the outer circles of the infinite. And to Jew and Gentile, it tells of prayer, and hope and peace.

Within the academy, the teachers are transformed into trained nurses, performing alternately the duties of visiting the sick, and of preparing nourishment for the victims of the fever. All the fowls within the village have been utilized to make life-sustaining broth for the invalids; the inmates of the little barnyard of the presbytery alone remain. With an eye to

the possible emergencies of her beloved principal, the South Carolinian sturdily refuses to sacrifice his poultry. His nerves, strained to the utmost tension, his brain racked by the exhaustion of incessant vigils, the master of the presbytery silently allows the aide-de-camp to have her way. As time passes on, however, the need of the sick grows more and more urgent. Wishing, in his great weariness, to avoid an encounter with Aunt Lucy, but determined to offer his fowls for the relief of the sufferers, Louis Vally steals, in the "sma' hours" into his barnyard, and extracts his own poultry with more trepidation than a scout would smuggle himself through the enemy's lines. In the gray dawn, tottering from the fatigue of a night of ministry, the missionary conveys the fowls to the convent kitchen, and creeps silently back to his humble domicile before the harsh creak of the front door sounds the *reveille* of the foe. Gradually, despite the stony countenance of the visitant in their midst, through the gloom of death, the anguish of spirit and body, the "Sunshine of the streets of Meridian" begins to illumine, inflame, and recreate the weary souls within the little hamlet. Men in despair, be-

cause of financial as well as physical conditions, feel the dull agony of despondency abate beneath the inspiring influence of the missionary's example. Peace unfurls her white wings above them like a visible presence. But while his love and his labor shed refreshing calm upon the hearts of the people, the heart of Louis Vally is torn by one of those mighty spiritual crises, that, like cataclasms, rend the soul of man, leveling its mountain peaks and exalting its valleys. News of the death of Rev. John H. McManus, a victim of the epidemic, of the hopeless condition of Rev. John Baptiste Mouton, and of the seizure of Right Reverend Wm. Henry Elder, his more than father, in the horrid grasp of the yellow demon, bows the head and spirit of the son of Simon and Marie into the dust. Alone in his little sanctuary, for the space of three hours, his spirit hangs on Golgotha, and the shadow of the Holy Mountain never leaves his life again. Home, kindred, country, he has long since forsaken, for the home and kinship of Eternal Truth; only the ties of the spirit remain, the supreme, sacred friendship of soul and soul,—the union of his mind with other minds that have in-

fused power and strength into his own. Such had been his companionship with John McManus, with John Baptiste Mouton,—more than all, with the Bishop of Mississippi. Now the strong lightnings of the Lord are flashing; they wither the tendrils that twine about his soul; and, for the nonce, his spirit totters unsupported above the tomb where hope lies buried by the distraught sons of men. For the first time, the missionary shrinks from the terrible face of the visitant.

It is the feast of St. Michael, the strong archangel, the victorious wrestler with the spirit of evil, the commander-in-chief of the Spirits of Light. A swift inspiration comes to the soul of Louis Vally. A short invocation,—one wrench of the spirit, from the clutches of illusion—St. Michael to the rescue! Faith, which is power, must conquer, for the light of faith is crowned in the universe of God!

Absorbed in his great struggle, the son of Lavaudieu does not hear the swift step of the Sister of Mercy, who comes, by way of the sacristy, into the church. It is to call the priest to a passing Christian. Appalled by the look upon the missionary's face, an expression at once so

sorrowful and so sweet, for the spirit's tempest leaves its rainbows, the Daughter of Catherine Mac-Auley pauses a few paces from the door:— "They have sent for you, Father, for one who is departing." "I come,—good Sister, stay—" as the messenger is about to withdraw, "pray for me, *pray* for me this day. I have passed through fierce temptation; the epidemic is robbing me of all I have."

The strong manna of prayer, the supreme channel by which the Divine Essence enters into and nourishes the soul of man, has recreated the spirit of the missionary. Another step toward the inner circle of life, and Truth has been taken by Louis Vally, and henceforth the "Sunshine of the streets of Meridian" illumines the little village with nobler, holier light. Spiritual strength, like a powerful electric current, thrills and vivifies all it touches; and from the virile personality of their pastor, new strength and sweetness goes forth to his people. His brief hours of repose are more and more curtailed. Grappling every moment with the pestilence, overworked, overwrought, his system totally depleted, any hour may number him among the stricken. And so

the Daughters of Catherine Mac-Auley arrange a signal, and a crimson-shaded lamp is given the missionary. When its red star shall shine from the window of the presbytery, the soldiers of sacrifice will know that their captain has become a victim, that the rescuer must be rescued. Meanwhile, Louis Vally moves from home to home, from bedside to bedside, from grave to grave;—grave of Catholic, and non-conformist, of Israelite and of unbeliever, made brethren in the vast congregation of death.

When the epidemic reaches its zenith, few are left to shroud the departed, or to bear the discarded clay back to the great earth mother; and in the solemn hours of the night, when the dread Presence weaves her fatal spell more closely about the village, the missionary mounts the mortuary cart, and drives final passengers to their final resting-place. Frequently, laboring with his own hands, he upturns the warm fragrant soil, fashioning a bed for the stark inmates of the narrow boxes. The mysterious stars look down as he toils,—toils like the hardy apostles, like the strong men of old, who lived by the spirit of the law. But if Louis Vally labors for his people

from dawn to sunset and from sunset until dawn, one hour of the twenty-four is kept inviolate. Between five and six in the afternoon of every day, the soldier keeps vigil with his King; and in the silence that flows about the tabernacle, draws the strength that nerves his heart and hand for their renewed endeavor. Sometimes, overcome by excessive fatigue, he falls asleep at the Master's feet.

As the dread work of death goes on, the soldiers of sacrifice over the barracks of the Lord, begin to suffer more and more keenly from the privations of the times. Worn by incessant watching the sick and dying and emaciated, because of insufficient nourishment, for the village is practically in a state of siege—the Daughters of Catherine Mac-Auley find themselves reduced to the most meagre diet by which life can be sustained. Every fowl within reach must be given to the sufferers, of fresh meat there is none in the hamlet. "But not by bread alone does man live;" and nourished by the manna of the word, the valiant women push on their immortal work in human souls. And the soldiers are cheery as becomes good warriors, and between missionary

and nuns the banter passes, that when the frost jewels shine upon the stricken town, a savory chicken pie shall be baked, of which captain and soldiers will partake. So brightly flows the life on which the light of God is shining; though the stream may glide through Saharas of privation, through rocky canyon of self-sacrifice, the dawn is in its bosom, and through all environments, unfurls the bannerettes of light.

The violence of the epidemic begins to abate. Inch by inch, the fangs of the yellow monster withdraw from the lacerated hearts of the people. The Dread Presence veils her sphynx-like countenance, and moves slowly toward the forest. Like a bride arrayed for the nuptials of a king, the Feast of All Saints comes forth attended by the white-robed spirits of the frost. They kindle a million gems upon tree and hedgerow, they weave a shining carpet for the village streets, they swing glittering garlands upon eaves and fences, they glorify the graves of the newly-buried, and they quicken the hearts of the living with keen and jubilant hope.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE PALACE OF THE KING

From the vestibule of the mystical palace of love, through the golden court of noble human friendship, and into the inner chamber of the King's mansion, where solitude builds a sanctuary for the Lamb, the son of Simon and Marie is led by the guardian spirit of his destiny.

News comes one day from far Lavaudieu, of the passing of his paternal parent, the gentle and beloved father, the friend and confidant of his exiled son. And, following that loss, after a brief interval, a message is received by Louis Vally from his soul's dear comrade, M. Vigue, announcing that he, Father Vigue, will leave the outer world, with its noise as of many waters, and enter into the quiet where no sound is heard save the whisper of the King. Friend in the supreme sense of the word, has Marcellus Vigue been to the son of the Vallys. Friend of his heart, and later of his spirit, the elder priest

having held for years, the office of confessor to our missionary.

To the Roman Catholic, who knows the spiritual communion, the touch of soul and soul implied between priest and penitent, in the Great Tribunal, the loss of such a guide gives keenest suffering to the moral nature. What Plato and Socrates and Epictetus were to their disciples, what Pericles was to Athens, what all teachers and supreme prophets have been to their followers, that, and infinitely more, is the enlightened confessor to the Roman Catholic conscience. A bereavement beyond all other bereavements, is his loss, because a loss that affects directly the life and progress of the spirit. True the Maker of the human soul is the first and ultimate leader, and the destiny of every spirit lies in His individual will; the office of the Catholic priest is not to supply, but to foster the divine institution, to protect the wheat thereof from the cockle and the tares.

Some souls there are that can only achieve their destinies and take their proper place in the universe of spirit, by withdrawing themselves from the social order. Fragrant herbs that

reach perfection by burial in the sod and the shadow; they resemble those insects that mature in prison-like chrysalids.

Such souls must wear human life as a husk, they burst their chrysalis only at the touch of death.

They have their mission in the scheme of things, and it is a mission of exaltation and of power.

All the contemplative orders in the Roman Catholic Church are composed of such men, and notable among them is the order of Trappists.

When a single thought flashes, arrow-like through the universe, launched upon an eternal career, modifying and moulding in a greater or less degree, the lives and destinies of creatures, what awful power must the virile meditation of a community of strong men exercise upon the plastic universe of mind!

To the comradeship of these silent leaders, the unknown Gladstones and Disraelis of humanity, Marcellus Vigue had received the appointment of the King. The missionary priest needs the preparation for his journey; for his goods, like those of Christian's may generally be carried

upon his shoulder, upon his pilgrimage to the Celestial City. But, with Marcellus Vigue there is his old horse Charlie, to be disposed of, for he has bestowed upon the animal the peculiar love a lonely man gives to a dumb companion. Charlie is a missionary himself, and Charlie has often borne the King beneath the reverent boughs of the forest aisles. So, with a pang that only the solitary can know, Charlie is given to his dearest friend, and from that day becomes the comrade of Louis Vally.

Few words break the silence of the journey, as the pastor of Meridian accompanies Marcellus Vigue to the Trappist monastery at Gethsemane, Kentucky.

No sound is heard in the old courtyard of Gethsemane. So inviolate is the calm that shy doves have made their home by the moss-grown well and above the statue of St. Bernard, its tutelar guardian of the grounds, they coo their love words and rear their young. At the end of the garden enclosure, the great pile of the monastery looms gravely against the sunset. Within its solemn portal, long dim arcades reverberate the footfalls of the newcomers. Everywhere,

above the twilight cells above hall and stairway and chapter-room, stone upon stone, the sacred invisible palace of the King, the mighty temple of silence lifts its eternal battlements on high; and in this temple face to face with Truth and Calm, within this temple where the spirit of man unfurls its wings and souls grow God-like, walk the mute, strong brethren of the Trappists.

With the very atmosphere of the place, something of the magnitude, the unique glory of his friend's vocation, dawns upon Louis Vally; and, with a reverence akin to awe, his gaze rests upon M. Vigue, leaving his friend only to greet the noble Abbot, who bids them welcome with gracious word and mien. A slight suggestion of the court lends peculiar dignity to the words and bearing of this remarkable Trappist,—a certain princely ease marks him to "the manner born." In the world of men, the Abbot of Gethsemane has borne the name of Bourbon. Called yet higher by the King of Kings he entered his Tuilleries of Silence.

Passing into the monastery chapel at twilight, when the first moonbeam touches the great Crucifix, making it tower, luminous and vast over the

solemn, cowled heads of the brethren, like the cross in Tissot's paintings, Louis Vally feels himself face to face with God, the great facts of the spiritual life becoming solid, cognizable realities. Now, the "Salve Regina" is entoned in the peculiar chant used by the Trappists, a chant from which nearly all the melody is extracted, leaving only the monotonous wail. But, as though the moonbeam itself, pleading for the banished spirit of music, has clothed itself in human voice, silver and clear and resonant, threading the gloom of the chant and the chapel, as crystal waters thread a dark morass, comes harmony such as Father Vally has never heard before. Leaning eagerly forward in the dusk, the missionary endeavors to trace the wondrous music to its source. As the service concludes, and the sandal-shod brethren pass into the inner chambers of the mystical palace, Louis Vally grasps the Abbot's arm, exclaiming as he does so :—"The voice! Father, the voice! surely the world holds not its equal." "Truly, my son," replies the venerable host, "all visitors are likewise impressed. It is the voice of a famous opera singer, who abandoned his career, and came to Gethsemane, when at the

zenith of his greatness. He sings now only in the presence of the King."

The following day, as the evening shadows gather like vestals to a sacrifice, Louis Vally and Marcellus Vigue walk slowly down the courtyard, side by side, urging their reluctant steps past the mating doves and the mild St. Bernard on toward the porte cochere of the monastery, and —the last farewell.

Never again, as far as human foresight can predict, will they feel the pressure of one another's hands, or hear the words of one another's lips. Great tears spring to the eyes of both, as the janitor swings open the clanging gates;—one strong embrace, and the bodies of the friends are torn apart. But the spirits of them, triumphant and exultant, pass together on the great Way Eternal; for no height, nor depth, nor time, nor space, nor any incident in human life, nor death, nor God, can separate those kindred souls who dwell in the countless chambers of the King's mansion. And though the desert unfurls its sands, the ocean rolls its blue immensity, or the pallid marble of the tomb keeps sentinel between them, the spirit

may seek and find its dear companion spirit and hold with it a sweet communion.

And besides the uncreated palace where Supreme Wisdom makes His throne-room, the King has also chosen to dwell in earthly temples, where souls too feeble to unbar the solemn gates of Silence may have continual audience. Of wood, and brick, and stone, all the simple products of His gardens, and the labor of the sons of men, the Master would have those other mansions built; and Louis Vally, loyal servant of his Liege, desires with a great desire, to make the earthly palace of the Master, as fair as his, the servant's, meagre revenue will permit.

Returning from Gethsemane with a new light within his spirit, the pastor of Meridian casts himself, soul and body into the labor of building a nobler church,—a substantial brick edifice, within his little mission. It is now about the year 1885. The New Orleans and Northeastern Railroad is just completed, and the flock of the Roman Catholic pastor increases to such proportions that the frame building hitherto utilized as a place of worship, is insufficient for the accommodation of the recruits. But the

congregation, though larger, is yet a struggling one. The conditions of life are still austere, and penury, like a hidden fetter, binds the generosity of the people within narrow limitations. Not so much as the least two-figured bill of the paper currency of the Republic, lies to the credit of the missionary in the local bank;—plainly, he must look for supernatural aid, or abandon his project in its incipiency.

Drawing from the pocket of his cassock the rosary that has touched the rocks of Massabielle, Louis Vally raises the chaplet above his head as though to arrest, by gentle violence, the attention of the Divine Beauty, exclaiming aloud, as he does so, "O my powerful queen, you have never failed me,—you cannot fail me now!"

A strong and pure spirit commands the stock exchange, the universe is its Wall Street, and always, it is master of conditions. As well try to dam the Atlantic with a cockle shell, as to set Penury to thwart the projects of the soul. The spirit of man is in touch with infinite force, and under certain conditions, itself becomes the law.

When Louis Vally's determination to build a

new church became known among his parishioners, "the mad project of the little Father," as the scheme was good-naturedly called, was received, nevertheless, as an idea that would somehow be substantiated. The people were beginning to understand their pastor, to know the manner of man they had to deal with, and to repose a blind faith in the French peasant, who seemed to possess some subtile power to bring all things his way.

About this period, the beloved prelate, Right Reverend William Henry Elder, whom Louis Vally had followed from Le Puy, is promoted to the arch-diocese of Cincinnati. The blow strikes to the quick; every fibre of the spiritual organism of the missionary quivers painfully because of the removal of his venerable leader from the Natchez Bishopric. Right Reverend Francis Jansens is elevated to the vacant see, and with his advent, by the immutable law of compensation, Louis Vally gains a friend, whose intuitive comprehension never fails him. Great spirits know and respond to each other like electric currents; and it required little time for the keen perception of the new-made Bishop to recognize

the unique character of the obscure Frenchman in the little Meridian mission. When, therefore, Louis Vally's petition for permission to undertake the building of the church, was laid before the prelate, together with the beautiful plan sent by Mr. Alfred Zucher of New York, Bishop Jansens made answer in the affirmative, adding, "The undertaking is rash beyond measure; if it were any one but Louis Vally, I would refuse my consent."

In the same letter, Bishop Jansens suggested that the chapel to St. Joseph, included in the plan, should be omitted.

Now, while all these things were transpiring, our missionary had made a compact. He went, one morning, in his simple way, to a great man, no other than Joseph, the prime minister of the King. He, Louis Vally, wished to build for the King, and it was the plain duty of the patriarch to help him. So, to the prime minister he went, and said: "You have always guarded the interests of the Royal Family, and I think you ought to aid me. I want to build a new palace for the Master,—only brick and mortar, but the King will have it so. Now, the prime minister should

be near his Liege, and I will build you a chapel at the Lord's right hand if you will help me in the matter."

And so it comes to pass when the episcopal letter containing the mandate to eliminate St. Joseph's chapel, is read by Louis Vally, the missionary responds with superb simplicity that carries all before it;—"I have promised this chapel to St. Joseph by solemn contract. If you will undertake the responsibility, and will reckon personally with the prime minister, I will leave the chapel out,—otherwise, it must be built."

With an ingenuous disposition that matches the faith of his subordinate, Francis Jansens replies: "I want to pick no quarrel with St. Joseph; build your chapel." And it was done.

The old frame church must now be removed. One has always to prepare the ground to build the King's palace, whether in the material or the moral world. In the fall of '85, the work begins, and autumn seems to wear the gold of June, so fair are the days to Louis Vally. When St. Patrick holds his festival of '86, the corner-stone of the new building is ready to be laid.

Fit patron of the arduous undertaking, was

the marvelous Apostle of Ireland,—an unknown shepherd, the visible result of whose work exceeds that of any other missionary of the Christian world, for his was power of spirit and the confidence that resolves adamantine difficulties and commands the elemental forces. The day that witnessed the ceremony was a perfect one to the jubilant heart of Meridian's pastor, a heart upon which high spiritual enthusiasm conferred perpetual youth. His bishop was present on the occasion, and Rev. Patrick Haydn, now vicar general of the diocese, spoke glowing words of sympathy and congratulation. Across the waste of waters, from far-off Lavaudieu, the rock that served as the corner-stone was transported; and therein we find a fitting symbol of those faithful years spent by the son of the Vallys in his native village, those seasons of childhood and of early youth, that constituted so solid a foundation for the fine superstructure of his character.

And the King sent gold to aid the builders of His palace. By the generosity of Mr. C. Mair, a noble Chicago philanthropist, substantial help was given the missionary, and the beautiful furniture of the Sacred Heart Chapel that occupies

the left wing of the building, thereby attained. And the soul of Louis Vally sang like a wild bird from excess of gladness.

For a few months after the above eventful day, the work of the building went steadily on. With the tenderness of a young mother for her first-born, the pastor of Meridian watches beside the rising structure, brooding over the very stones as though they were living things.

Slowly as the sunset builds its shining battlements upon the crimson west, so out of the strong desire of the missionary's spirit, the burning enthusiasm of his soul, the precious temple of his crowning hope, takes shape and solidity. Built literally by the spirit of him; for as time goes on, his finances are exhausted, and when the workmen demand their wages, the son of Simon and Marie, like a frightened child, hides himself from the noise in the thick pine groves near the rectory, with the old instinct to lay his cares upon the breast of nature, that prompted him long ago upon the sunlit slopes of Lavaudieu. Days there are when he faces the bluff, kindly mechanics for the calls of the King, and in His name speaks

to them touching words of pacification and of pleading. "Gold and silver I have none, but what I have I give thee," well might have been exclaimed, for into the spirit of the workmen from the spirit of the peasant pastor, crept a strong new energy, the energy of self-sacrifice. And so they labored, receiving uncertain wages drawn at intervals from the proceeds of the little parish festivals, and donations from the members of the devoted congregation, one and all of whom, though they had looked askance at his project, wrought, heart to heart with their leader.

The crowning day of days draws near,—the morning of July 5, 1887. A cloudless dawn unbars its golden gates and a thousand glories weave a vast mosaic in the east, like the façade of a great cathedral wrought in prismatic stone, like a vision of the Holy City.

Within the new St. Patrick's Church, through the window-frames where the panes of glass pour fountain like cascades of rainbow light upon the flower-decked altar, and kindles to glittering brightness the noble colors of the American, French and Irish flags above the

reredos, fleur-de-lys and shamrock gleam and glitter, the red, white and blue of our national standard, and the garlands wreathed about the sanctuary glow like flowers of flame at the magic touch of the morning radiance.

Priests from every part of the diocese have assembled to do honor to the son of Lavaudieu on this, his day of supreme triumph, the consecration of the new temple of the Lord. The episcopacy recognizing the wonder wrought in the Meridian mission by the Vallys' son is to be nobly represented by Right Reverend J. Sullivan of Mobile who will celebrate the pontifical Mass a few hours later; and by Right Reverend Francis Jansens who will preach.

The serried ranks of tapers, forming a guard of honor around the King have not yet been kindled for the gracious inauguration of His new abode. Soon, they will burn themselves away in ecstasies, as the royal notes of Lambillotte's Paschal Mass in "D," calls glorious echoes from the sanctuary and nave. As yet, all things are still, only the missionary and the dawn crave audience with the Master. Silently, Louis Vally passes through the little sacristy, and stands be-

fore the flower-clad altar. The air is heavy with the incense breathed from a thousand living crucibles, the gem like lips of many blossoms; the very atmosphere is throbbing with expectation of the coming triumphal service. For a brief space, the builder would be alone with the King; the mansion is ready, only the approval of the Royal Householder is needed, and the Master speaks as He ever speaks to hearts in supreme moments; and having communed with the soul of Him, the King bestows upon the builder a jewel,—the flashing sapphire of great joy. Placing it upon his spirit where already gleams the pearl of charity and burns the ruby of self-sacrifice, the builder seals another and imperishable temple to the Lord. It is the temple of the human spirit that is attuned to the Spirit of the Father, and "It is the New Jerusalem that shall not pass away."

## CHAPTER XX

### THE SHECHINAH

LIKE the great light that beamed above the Holy of Holies of the Israelites, within the tabernacle of a strong and pure spirit shines the glorious Shechinah of the Lord. Though its radiance is invisible to mortal eyes, the souls of men perceive it instantly, and the beauty and the power thereof draws unto itself the hearts of all humanity. Philosopher and fool, sinner and saint, the sons of Adam with one accord yield consciously or unconsciously, to the magic influence of the man who lives and labors for the Truth. Clear visioned, indeed, were the old art masters, who surrounded sacred persons and things with a nimbus,—a corona of light, fit symbol of the spiritual emanation that environs all noble natures with a magnetic atmosphere, attracting what is great in other lives into its charmed circle. The powerful magnetism of Truth is one of the vital laws of the universe.

Every physical grace may be denied the individual who possesses this force, and the body of him may be clad in the loathsome rags of Lazarus; nevertheless, he walks a king, and from the rising to the setting of the sun no spirit dares deny his sovereignty. Since creation's dawn, princes clad in purple and fine linen have bowed before the Josephs and the Elijahs of the race. Always have the Davids soothed and swayed the Sauls, always has the touch of the spirit of John upon the spirit of his brethren, been surety of the advent of the Christ. Now, as in the days of old, humble Daniels interpret Pharoahs' dream,—the feverish, garish dreams that anon visit the couches of the sons of Mammon.

And the life of the peasant of Lavaudieu in the lowly environments through which the path of his destiny leads upward to the light, begins to draw unto itself with a sweeter and stronger compulsion, the lives of his fellow men. Daily, the circle of his influence increases, for verily, in spiritual and eternal things, to give is to receive; and the bread cast upon the waters returns to impart a tenfold strength unto the soul.

Among the little flock of our missionary, there is one, a widow, who hears the invitation of the spirit's Bridegroom to partake of the eternal marriage feast. Upon earth, she is a mother, it is true; but she is likewise the King's daughter, and the King recalls that daughter home. Her babes must be left,—but they also are the King's wards, and He will guard them even as He guards the lily and the wren.

As Louis Vally kneels beside the couch of the dying parent, she speaks to him these words:—

"My father,—for such you have been to me, father and pastor and friend in one, promise me that you will take my little ones, and that where I go, they, one bright and blessed day, will follow me. Tell me you will be their parent; my death will make them orphans,—tell me quickly —there are spirit voices calling."

Sweet and clear through the soul of Louis Vally steals the whisper of the King: "Whatsoever you do unto the least of Mine, you do it unto Me!"

Bowing his head in acquiescence, the missionary replies:—"I will take them, my daughter,—go on your way rejoicing."

Jubilantly, the angelic guardians swing wide the gates of the Everlasting Nuptial Chamber, and the Christian, no longer widowed, greets the spouse.

Five little maids and a sturdy lad now open with their childish fingers another sealed chamber of our missionary's experience, a door through which he passes into the possession of great joy, of new illumination, of power increased to love and serve humanity.

Playfully alluding to their surname (Crowe), the newly appointed guardian calls his tiny wards "My five white crows." Soon, Margaret, the eldest, wins the soubriquet, "My Pride," Annie, "My Support"; Ellen, "My Spiritual Consolation"; Martha, "My Intercessor with God";—and verily she was such, for at the age of thirteen, she was reunited to her mother, in the King's mansion, and joined the white-robed virgins who follow the Lamb wheresoever He goeth. And the King came to meet her, for she received Him ere her departure, for the first time upon her heart, just as a lily receives the sun. Into the crowded life of Louis Vally a new element has entered, another absorbing care and

profound responsibility. The overburdened moments of the missionary's day almost refuse to respond to the extra demand made upon them, but it is a question of the King's wards, and time is the handmaiden of the Lord.

The lad is placed under the care of an aunt, a Mrs. Dwyer, of Mobile, but the constant supervision of the pastor-guardian follows him. The little maids are kept close to his right hand,—at St. Aloysius' Academy, where he can daily visit them, and listen to their voices, and mingling its divine undertone with the childish prattle, the son of Simon and Marie hears the whisper of the King.

In later years, when the spirits of the young wards have begun to put forth flower and fruit, Annie and Ellen enter the sisterhood of Catherine Mac-Auley, and the guardian priest looks joyously on as the white-robed brides of Zion go forth to meet their spouse.

Contact with the various phases of human life, character, and even of evil, develop the soul force of man, and train the spiritual as well as the intellectual athlete. Thus, in the superb moral economy of the universe, the sinner lifts the

saint to more serene plateaux, and the false is torch-bearer of the true.

Up to the present period of his career, our peasant of Lavaudieu has known but little of the darker aspects of human nature, the sinister depths in which the soul of man can lose itself. In the course of a pastorate among a God-fearing, law-abiding people, the more lurid lights of evil are rarely encountered. But now that the life of the French missionary gives forth a luminance of its own, spirits wandering in the night of moral darkness are insensibly attracted thereto.

It is the dawn of Saturday morning, the eve of Palm Sunday in the early nineties; and as Louis Vally unbars the doors of the church, the east is crowned with a vast corona of iridescent rays shot upward by the slowly rising sun. Prismatic light fills the little vestibule with glory, and falls brightly upon the brow of the missionary, who starts in surprise, as the tall form of a noble-looking stranger stands upon the pavement just beneath the open door. Before Louis Vally can recover from his astonishment, the unknown mounts the steps of the church, keeping,

the while, his singularly powerful eyes fixed upon those of the priest. Leaning close to the startled missionary, the stranger murmurs huskily, mighty yearning sobbing through his words: "Father, can you hear a sinner's confession?"

The unique personality of the stranger marks him a man of power and passion, a man of force and sin. Involuntarily, Louis Vally recoils. Something baneful seems to issue from the very body of the unknown,—the exhalation of evil, the miasma of crime. Seeing the movement made by the priest, a note of entreaty enters into the pleader's voice. "Refuse me not, Father, your very face attracted me. I know you are a man of God. For such a one I have sought, for I am sorely burdened." With the motion of a parent toward an erring child, Louis Vally places his hand tenderly upon the shoulder of the unknown:—"Come, my son, I will do what I can for you."

Followed by the stately incognito, the missionary enters the confessional. Slowly the burdened moments pass,—oppressed with human agony, with deep remorse for treachery and blackest crime.

When pastor and penitent leave the tribunal, both look transfigured,—the glory of triumphant thanksgiving upon the one, the glory of salvation upon the other. What Tabor was to the Body of Christ, is the soul's repentance to the soul. More than a cleansing from evil, it is an infusion of divine vitality, and the glory thereof is made manifest at times through the mortal vesture of the regenerated spirit.

Waiting in the rear of the church until the penitent is ready to depart, the missionary silently extends his hand, and before he can remonstrate, the stranger presses it eagerly to his lips and the great hot tears of a strong man fall upon it.

On Sunday morn the little church is filled with worshipers; palm branches wave through every soul in honor of the King's entry into His beloved City; and the glances of the congregation rest inquiringly upon the noble looking incognito who bows in rapt adoration near the throne. As the supreme moment arrives, and the King comes down from His diaz and gives His regal person in incomprehensible union to his subjects, the eyes of the unknown seem to

look straight into the eyes of the Master, and the world of men vanishes from his senses, as the Prince of the House of David gives the repentant traitor the sacramental kiss of peace. By subtle instinct the members of the little congregation know that something of unusual moment is taking place, the Shechinah glows within them, every prayer becomes a vision, and every breath becomes a prayer, and from the hearts of all within the church arise the jubilant notes of triumph and praise: "Hosannah! to the Son of David; blessed is He who cometh in the name of the Lord!"

As the unknown communicant leaves the altar rails, the church is so still that one almost hears the greeting of the King as He enters the New Jerusalem of his predilection,—the soul of the repentant sinner.

In the afternoon of the triumphant day, the unknown stranger presents himself at the little presbytery. Glancing at the card handed him by Aunt Lucy, Louis Vally almost leaps from his chair in amazement,—it bears the name of the notorious, the most relentless persecutor of the Roman Catholic Church.

And the spirit of the missionary seemed to hear with the Apostle, the "Great voice of much people in heaven, saying, 'Alleluia; salvation, and glory, and honor, and power to the Lord our God!'"

At this period, the zenith of the life-work of the son of Lavaudieu, every season of the golden year becomes a harvest time, and into the vast granaries of the King, the peasant priest gathers the immortal seed. As the spring deepens into summer, Marie Vally joins her husband in the Kingdom. Another and most precious heart tie is broken for Louis, the now wholly orphaned son; but the kindred of his spirit assemble and will keep tryst in their imperishable dwelling place. Realizing this, a note of triumph rings even in the sob that breaks anon through the chant of the Requiem Mass sung by the bereaved missionary for his mother's soul; and the light that shines from the face of the celebrant, tells those of his people who are present that the spirit of Marie, and the spirit of her son hold converse. Aye, dear brother, even as your soul to my soul will speak, if we are one in truth and grace, with the perfect comprehension and in

complete communion. When the veil of the flesh has been rent in twain, then, and only then, will men truly know each other. Bearing weal or woe, triumph or failure to the sons of Adam, the unwearied years wore on, themselves always victorious, always potent ambassadors of Time. From the cradle to the grave, from the grave back to the cradle the pendulum of life swings ceaselessly and the immortal spirits march on grand parade, an endless quickstep from eternity to eternity.

Christmas-tide is again at hand, and the sweet influence of the Christ-child is abroad in the land. The new church in the Meridian mission blazes with light; and the exultant chant of the angels seems to ring through the little sanctuary as Louis Vally taking the white Host within his hand, pronounces the tremendous words that shake the strong foundation of the Uncreated Throne. Raising the God-made Man on high, the overpowering glory of the Incarnation sweeps through the soul of the priest, with an intensity of realization he has never known before,—even in his moments of most intimate communion with the King, almost suspending for an instant, the

consciousness of his environment. Something of his interior illumination becomes visible upon the countenance of our missionary, and is distinctly evident to those near the sanctuary. High up in the middle aisle sits a young woman radiant with the joy of bridehood. A Presbyterian by birth and education, she has come for the first time to a Roman Catholic Church to hear the royal music of the Christmas-tide.

As though the celebrant has exercised a magnetic influence, her eyes are riveted upon the face of Louis Vally, when at the elevation bell, holding aloft the Host, his every faculty absorbed, consumed, as it were, in contemplation akin to actual vision. Thus the moment passes. The sweet invocations of the Agnus Dei bring a slight reaction; the countenance of the missionary is again turned toward the tabernacle, but the young woman seated in the third pew has become transfigured. Joy, amazement, yearning, and indomitable resolve mingle upon her expressive features. The service concludes, the new-made wife retires with the congregation, but upon her soul has been placed the seal of the predilection of the King. On the day after the

great festival, the young bride presents herself at the presbytery. The modest garments, the high-bred air, were duly noticed by Aunt Lucy, as she took the bit of pasteboard proffered by the visitor. "She's a sho' nuff genteel 'oman, Father; 'speck she must have come from Caroliny."

Entering his little study, the missionary stood face to face with the visitor of the previous morning, whose absorbed attention he had noticed in the church. Replying briefly to his greeting, the young woman exclaimed:—"Father, *I believe in the Roman Catholic Religion; teach* me how to practice it. It was the look upon your face that did it,—you seemed to speak to God, *to see Him.*"

Unable to control his strong emotion, Louis Vally exclaimed in answer:—"Truly, the Lord has chosen a lowly instrument; 'for He that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy is His name.'"

On the fourteenth of February of the same year, the little Alabama bride, after a due course of instruction was formally presented to the King, and every day thereafter, whether the sun shone, or the spring storms gathered, she was

accustomed to spend one hour in the royal audience chamber. "My bee is in the church gathering honey," the missionary frequently exclaimed, as the quietly-garbed figure glided through the little side door of the sacristy. But a few months passed, however, before his "Bee" was summoned to the Eternal Meadows, and in the gardens of the King, found the flower of immortal bliss.

With heart made glad by such sweet harvesting, Louis Vally brings redoubled zeal to the service of the Master. So bounteous a Lord should have a grateful steward.

Stained glass memorial windows and a fine pipe organ, upon which the royal chants could be more fitly played, were, somehow, obtained.

The steadily increasing number of pupils begins to overflow the narrow limits of St. Aloysius' Academy, and a new wing is built. Nineteen of the former students of that institution, for most of whom our missionary had poured the baptismal waters, now grown-up maidens, espoused the Lamb by entering the order of the Sisters of Mercy, because of the potent influence of the peasant pastor, teaching as it does, what

a glad and glorious thing it is to dwell close to the person of the King.

A quarter of a century has elapsed since the son of Simon and Marie left the Seminary of Le Puy to follow the American Bishop to his foreign mission,—a quarter of a century's pastorate in Meridian, as well as twenty-five years since his commission as one of the ambassadors of the Most High. A double festival, therefore, approaches, and as the day of their pastor's silver jubilee draws near, the little flock is on the *qui vive* of expectation.

Beyond the limits of his congregation, and even of the town of Meridian itself, the fine enthusiasm of the people of Mississippi to do honor to our missionary is manifested in a kindly rivalry, that bids fair to make the fête-day of Louis Vally one never to be forgotten by the jubilarian or his friends. Gentile and Israelite, residents of the little city and those of the surrounding country, vie with each other in doing honor to the peasant of Lavaudieu, whose life has wrought leaven within the lives of his fellow men, purifying and exalting both individual and community. The shabby, uncomfortable little

presbytery is made brand-new with fragrant matting and upholstered furniture, the gift of the Jewish citizens of Meridian. The plated spoons, much scarred from long service, are honorably retired, like old soldiers, to the cupboard of the little *cuisine* and shining silver is placed upon the homely table. Royal, glittering vestments, the ambassador's robes of state, given by the Sodalities, are hidden away in the sacristy to await the momentous day. A purse is made up among the gentlemen of the congregation in order to entertain the right noble guests who will assemble from many states to celebrate the labors and the festival of the humble son of the Vallys.

One of those mild bright mornings, like May-days gone astray, which visit us, anon, during the early part of the southern winter, inaugurates the day of the silver jubilee. The little church seems verily the Bride of the Lamb in her marriage garments of white and silver, awaiting the coming of the Bridegroom, upon the altar-throne. The sanctuary is thronged with the visiting clergy; and Archbishops Elder, Jansens, and Bishop Heslin, the three prelates who have

guarded the Mississippi diocese during Louis Vally's missionary and pastoral labors therein, give the tribute of their presence to the life-work of the son of Lavaudieu. The snow-white surplices of the altar boys gleam here and there like big snowflakes between the brilliant gold of the vestments of the priests and deacons. Louis Vally officiates, attended by Fathers Picherit of Vicksburg, F. Blanc of Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, and J. McCafferty of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, acting respectively as priest, deacon and subdeacon. The little building is densely crowded by men and women of every denomination. The eager populace overflows into the aisles, and as the superb notes of Mozart's Twelfth Mass burst like a storm from the organ, the great throng presses eagerly forward to obtain a little view of the glowing decorations of the altar, and the beloved jubilarian of the day. The superb Credo is now ended, and the last notes of the Veni Creator ripple slowly out, in ever widening circles until it mingles with the "sea of glass." But before the Bishop of Mississippi, who is about to preach the panegyric, ascends into the pulpit, the prelate pauses in the centre of the

sanctuary. By a previous understanding, stole, mitre and crozier are held in readiness by the attendants. The people bend forward, puzzled, expectant. Beckoning the amazed son of the Vallys to approach, Bishop Heslin presents him with the canonical robes and names him canon of the Cathedral. The brief ceremony over, the pastor of Meridian returns to his place, his eyes visibly glistening with tears, while an irrepressible murmur of enthusiastic admiration arises from the closely packed congregation. A slight shade of sadness flits over the mobile countenance of the Vallys' son. Beneath the robes of office the King had placed a nobler vestment, the Golden Fleece of Humility. All the power and privileges of Louis Vally's life have been drawn from the subtle strength that emanates therefrom; the meek souled priest would fain wear it unhidden to the end. Swiftly, however, the depression passes, and the higher truth comes in answer to his spirit's questioning. No place, or power, or raiment, can exalt the soul; neither can penury, nor persecution nor servitude debase it; *honor and glory and potency dwell within the spirit*, and to their measure man cannot add nor

take away. The cross of the Legion of Honor may mark, but cannot make the hero. Clothe the saint as Mephistopheles and he remains the saint. Garb Mephisto as a monk, and he is still the fiend.

And while all these thoughts are clamoring for expression, the glowing jubilee panegyric is being spoken by Right Reverend Thomas Heslin in St. Patrick's church. When the Bishop has concluded, and the sublime Credo is over, the Ave Maria will be sung at the request of the jubilarian, by one of his Sunday-school pupils. And to the son of Simon and Marie the solemn rite moves on, and is ended like a sacrifice in some wonderful dream.

As a dream also, a pageant with which he could hardly identify himself, passed the great banquet given during the afternoon at the "Grand Avenue Hotel," when the mayor of the town, and the Catholic Knights and members of the "Benevolent Society" gathered round the board to do him honor.

When the clear, crisp night comes down, the Grand Opera House, lent by its proprietors for the occasion, blazes with electric lights, while

amid the clustered palms and the many colored flowers, the pure white lilies of the *fleur-de-lys* shine like guardian angels of the pageant. One by one, as the beautiful jubilee drama goes on, the years of the pastor's life impersonated by the little maidens of his school, come out upon the stage, each bearing the symbol of some noble and imperishable gift of the missionary bestowed upon his people. Having done this, the white-robed maids pass on, vanishing from sight, even as the years themselves have vanished. As the exquisite panorama reaches its climax, the thoughts of Louis Vally revert to the dreary, wind-swept night, when, shivering, hungry and homeless, he waited for Rev. John Baptiste Mouton, at the little pine woods station. Now from the throng of children assembled *en masse*, for the triumphant music of the jubilee chorus, come the words of glory to the King, who has wrought such wondrous things, and every fibre in the being of our missionary gives forth a separate pæan, as forgetful, for the nonce, of his environment, "O God, who is like unto Thee!" verily, "Thou hast exalted the humble!"

But more precious to Louis Vally than all the

other gifts received upon his day of triumph, are the candelabra for the throne-room of the King, given by the Daughters of Catherine Mac-Auley, each member of the community being represented by a burning taper. Yes, they had been lights indeed, making bright his path and illumining his progress upward and onward. His "Crowes" brought two seraphim to stand on either side the throne. Truly, the deeds of men return to them as angels, good or evil. Then there was the tribute of his working men, the men of the pastor's predilection, of his yearning love. They bring him a handsome suit;—its tailor's *chef d'œuvre;* a shining beaver and walking cane and gloves. It is the smartest raiment the peasant priest has ever worn. But, is he not the King's ambassador? and though he loves not modish garments, —ah! greatly prefers the dear old cassock minus buttons and plus patches, yet it beseems a sovereign's minister to wear the best apparel that he can obtain without sacrificing his Lord's true interests to the same. With merry jest upon his lips, the almost evangelical simplicity of the Vallys' son being known to all present, Mr. Thos. McCarthy, spokesman for the men of

the "New Orleans and Northeastern Railroad Shops," presented the handsome outfit to our missionary. With a merry twinkle in his eye, kindled by the humor of the situation, the delegate said, "You must pledge yourself, Father Vally, not to put on airs." "I will not put on airs," responded the jubilarian, in his French English, the sunny smile they knew so well making bright his features;—"I will not put on air, boys," "and my heart would thank you better than my lips can say it";—the little French idioms clung to him until the end. At midnight, when the curtain fell upon the jubilee, a great cloud, like a big velvet pall, shut the moon ceremoniously from the world. A cold drizzle began to descend, but notwithstanding the hour and the teasing weather, the native humor of Louis Vally, repressed during the solemn ceremonies of the previous day, once more asserts itself.

Several of the guests, including the Bishop of Mississippi, are to depart at 3 A. M. Doing battle with excessive weariness, our missionary rises betimes, and, as though preparing for a white house *soiree*, makes an immaculate toilet, arraying in the full regalia of the brand-new outfit. As

the clerical party reach the dismal station, Louis Vally steps full into the light, revealing his wonderful toggery to his astonished companions. Pacing mincingly down the soggy platform, the jubilarian twists his cane with the insouciance of a Beau Brummel. Catching the humor of the situation, the jovial laugh of Bishop Heslin rings out upon the night:—"Remember, Father Vally," exclaims the almost hysterical prelate, "you promised not to put on 'air.'"

A few hours later, the son of Simon and Marie has resumed the shabby cassock and the sweet, hidden life in the little Meridian mission.

## CHAPTER XXI

### REVELATION

Calm, even unto monotony in outward seeming, are the years of the son of Lavaudieu that follow the triumph of the silver jubilee. Monotonous indeed, to the casual observer, but to the eyes of the spirit from which the scales have fallen, rich with Divine event, replete with happenings of infinite significance.

In the life of the spirit, there is no such thing as sameness. Not a single hour lived by the human soul is like the hour that preceded, or can resemble the hour that is to follow it. We sleep and take refreshment for the body, we touch familiar things, and fulfil familiar duties, and all the while the soul is passing from cataclasm to cataclasm, from cosmos unto cosmos. To such veiled and potent years man owes his power; at such times his destiny is wrought with Titan blows. Not by deeds that blaze, and vast philanthropies, does the spirit

grow to God-like stature, but by silence and by serene thought, for thence are heard the revelations of the King.

And as Louis Vally holds that sweet communion, the wondrous secrets of the Master begin to leave their impress upon his countenance and his mien. His fealty to the Sovereign, and to the Heavenly Queen, is manifested by increased ardor in action and in word. During the shepherd's heart to heart talks with his little flock, new power lurks in every utterance,—his faculties are transfigured by grace. Of average intellect by nature, this peasant-priest begins to experience a mental quickening, a sort of intellectual clairvoyance, that enables him to grasp spiritual conditions, and arrive at sound conclusions. This insight becomes daily more and more evident in his increasing power in the confessional. Every penitent in the little parish grows conscious of the new-born power, the nameless force that emanates from the faithful priest, and causes the men and women who kneel at his tribunal to feel as though an unseen, but resistless hand, were lifting them to higher things, lifting them out of sin and evil unto truth and

righteousness. To the pastor of Meridian, as to every human soul that has lived by spiritual realities, and grown strong upon the manna of prayer, comes a period of illumination, of infused wisdom, and mental power. These are the Divine lenses by which the clean of heart see God, and complete the threefold worship due from the creature to his Creator. For of every man, wise or simple, it is written:—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole mind." Hence the Curé d'Ars, the John Berchmanns of the world. And as the "Hall Mark" of true wisdom is the knowledge of values, the intrinsic and relative worth of all that is presented to the choice,—the second sight that perceives the greatness of little things and of lowly conditions, so an increasing zeal for the infirm, the suffering, the destitute, the social outcast, begins to color the more deeply, aye, even with his heart's blood, the daily life of our missionary. In the season of youth, while tending his sheep upon the verdant hills of Lavaudieu, the shepherd lad was wont to turn anon from his flock to succor some bewildered yearling of another fold that had wandered too

far from its dam and had become entangled in the fierce briars by the wayside. And now, in the day of his maturity, the earnest pastor shares his life and his love with those of pastures not his own. Daily, his round of pastoral visits is made, to the homes alike, of Catholic and of Protestant. In all seasons and all weather, Charlie stops, unbidden by the missionary, before the familiar gates, for the faithful comrade seems to share the enthusiasm of his master, and has grown so sagacious that Louis Vally tells his people:—"I am afraid to leave my window open, lest Charlie should learn the combination of my safe!"

At the end of a jasmine scented lane, where great oaks weave the sunlight into golden tapestry in fine weather, lives an elderly invalid from whose life the light has been quenched these many years. The glory of the June noonday cannot kindle one ray within his blighted eyes; and in the darkened chamber of his spirit, the gloom is deeper still. All day, the blind man lies and waits—for what?—the coming of the starless night? All night the blind man lies and waits,—for what?—the dawning of

the sunless day. And beyond the dark of night and day, another and more fearful gloom rolls outward to infinity. Beholding it, the blind man shudders.

Sometimes, when alone with the shoreless darkness, the stricken one draws from beneath his pillow the photograph of his only son; he presses the likeness to his lips, and between the kisses fall the tears, for the boy is far away. The blind man is of another fold than that of the pastor of Meridian; but when he hears the voice of the shepherd-priest in converse with his sister, a look of eagerness akin to hope dawns on his features, kindling them into the semblance of light. Calling to his kinswoman, the afflicted one requests: "Ask the priest to come hither; I would hear his voice more plainly." Is it that after years spent in the Master's service, peculiar power dwells in the very accents of the King's servants, so permeated are their souls with God? Do spirits, like æolian harps, give forth sweet sounds when the Divine breath has awakened them?

"Lean nearer, that I may touch you," entreats the invalid.

Louis Vally bends low beside the bed, and the blind man passes his hands slowly over the missionary's features; then exclaims abruptly,—the words thrilled with emotion: "Teach me to pray."

Dumb with amazement, Father Vally pauses a moment before responding: "My brother, we will pray together."

When Charlie reaches home that night, he divines that something wonderful has transpired, and the happy missionary gives his faithful co-laborer an extra allowance of hay for supper.

And as the fragrant summer days go by, upon the shore of the blind man's desolation, a light begins to break. Slowly, like a sunrise, the radiance of Eternal Love unfurls upon the horizon of his spirit, flooding all his being with Divine effulgence. The eyes of the blind man are yet closed to earthly day, but those of his soul have opened upon the uncreated splendors of Truth,—the blind man sees the King!

And having looked upon the Lord God, the blind man, who is also a paralytic, feels yet one strong desire, a great yearning to behold the face of the King's servant, who had led him into the

audience chamber, the countenance of Louis Vally. This, likewise, will soon be gratified, for the Master summons them both ere long to His Palace of Clear Vision, wherein priest and penitent will stand face to face.

And if the pastor of Meridian gathers an ever increasing number of wanderers into the fold of the Great Shepherd, he spends, likewise, more and more of his daily life in the earthly throne room of the Sovereign.

So supreme has become his enthusiasm for the work of the Great Tribunal that an electric bell connecting the church with the little presbytery is placed in one of the chapels of the former, in order that, at any hour of the day or night, the seeker after peace may command the dispenser thereof.

Of late, during the long hours within the tiny prison-house, a subtle weakness has stolen through the overtaxed frame of the missionary. The fierce simoon of sin seems to scorch his spirit, the polluted breath of the evil he exorcises, to wither his tormented nerves and heart. But, battling with physical depression, the steward of the King toils on.

With his continually deepening ardor for the King's honor, comes the strong desire on the part of Meridian's pastor to enlist the aid of other soldiers in the mighty standing army of the Truth. The activity of the human spirit is like the activity of the elemental forces,—the energies of air and sea. Set each in motion, and it continues in ever-widening circles until it merges into the Infinite.

Looking abroad for cooperation, the keen discernment of Louis Vally beholds the powerful and systematic work being done by the Society of Jesus, and recognizes in its members, his most potent allies.

With a great love has he loved these mighty men of thought, the intellectual Joshuas of New Israel, the resistless Knights of Thought, moving down the centuries with unbroken front, and doing deadly battle with the False. From the day when the powerful mentality of an Ignatius conceived the great society into which many of the master minds of the world were destined to be gathered, to this the twentieth century of the Christian era, the men of the Society of Jesus have been the intellectual colossuses of the

world. Individually, they are mental athletes; collectively, they are the most potent known organization of civilization, because the most tremendous force focused upon one object, acting as one brain. When a man has come forth from the many years' discipline of the Society of Jesus, the superb mental training, the spiritual culture of its thirty-day meditations, he stands forth a giant, and is able to do victorious battle with agnosticism.

A noble type of his royal order, is Rev. William Power, provincial of the Southern Mission of the Jesuits in North America, a man of valiant spirit, and of rare intellectual virility. Out of Ireland, that mould of heroic brain and brawn, came the provincial, having first seen the light in Dublin, on the 19th of April, in 1855. From his youth, of marked individuality, and profoundly imbued with a sense of the supreme responsibility of the human soul, William Power entered the Society of Jesus, on July 22, in the year 1873, the nineteenth of his age. As Father Power was received for the New Orleans Mission, which belonged at that period to the Province of Lyons, our student was sent to

France for his novitiate and juniorate. After completing the same, he came to America, and devoted several consecutive years to brilliant study in Woodstock College, Md., and subsequently was ordained priest by Cardinal Gibbons in the summer of '85. Soon after his elevation to the Order of Melchizedek, young Father Power went to Manresa, Spain, for his third probation. Upon his return to the United States from abroad, his remarkable ability was enlisted in missionary work, and for several years he gave retreats and protracted missions in most of the Southern States, a labor in which he met with phenomenal success. On the nineteenth of June, 1897, the fine capacity of our Jesuit being clearly recognized, Rev. Wm. Power was made Superior of the New Orleans Province, which exalted office he occupies and further exalts today.

And at this period of the life of the son of Lavaudieu, William Power enters into its most sacred recess, leaving thereupon, an indelible impress.

It is one of those humid mornings in early spring, when the moist exhalations of the earth

are pregnant with new life, and all the world is filled with resurrection. A golden jonquil pushes its inquisitive head into the study of the little Meridian presbytery, the door of which stands slightly ajar. Within the apartment, absorbed with the prospectus of the mission about to be given to his flock, Father Vally leans eagerly forward, his head, now faintly silvered, nearly touching that of the noble Jesuit, a brief sketch of whose career has just been given. In response to the petition of our missionary, William Power has come in person, accompanied by one of his Order, and the leonine brow of the guest is likewise bent low over the manuscript, in complete oblivion of all things save the work in hand. It is the first meeting between Louis Vally and the learned Jesuit, a meeting in which the fine spirituality, the high integrity, and all-compelling simplicity of the peasant-priest have swept the very heart-strings of the man of mind, and bound them irrevocably about the spirit of the humble son of Simon and Marie. The antipodes of character, of culture, of disposition, but both wise men and strong; the one finding wisdom through God-directed intellectual inspirations,

the other obtaining the same wisdom through love and God-directed service. With that child-like timidity, slightly tinged with awe, with which the Curé d'Ars greeted the mighty Lacordaire, Louis Vally makes welcome the brilliant visitor to his home. The first courteous words of the great Jesuit dispel the shyness of his host; a comprehensive look passes swiftly between them, and their hearts have met, to be parted nevermore. Unlike, yet strangely similar, the two; both indefatigable servants of the King, both consumed in mind and spirit by intense devotion to His work. Each, a man of kindly, sparkling humor; the one, meek with the meekness born of much knowledge; the other simple with the simplicity that this is the offering of prompt, unquestioning correspondence with grace. And the one ministers unto the other. The powerful individuality of the Jesuit reacts upon the son of the Vallys; the ingenious nature of Louis Vally reads its sublime lesson to his guest.

Thus were inaugurated the Jesuit Missions in the parish of Meridian. Year by year they became more fruitful, bearing the souls of the

little congregation ever upward to nobler spiritual ideals.

And the returning seasons brought Rev. William Power again and yet again to the tiny presbytery,—drawn by the sweet magnetism of the *life that the obscure Frenchman lived therein*, drawn from the rostrums of the great cities, from the stimulating arenas of mental activity, to the humble pulpit of St. Patrick's and the simple companionship of St. Patrick's pastor.

Not only to the infirm of soul and of body is the abounding spiritual vitality of Father Vally communicated at this epoch of his ministry. To those members of his flock, full of grace and truth and living always in the presence of the King, his virile influence brings flashes of yet purer light, stirrings of higher energies, the awakening of deeper yearnings for immortal things. Under such conditions, the "League of the Sacred Heart," and the "Society of the Living Rosary," those powerful confraternities of cooperative prayer, whose waves, like a sleepless sea, beat ceaselessly upon the uncreated shore, are established by the missionary in fruitful soil. With so potent a means of progress, the condi-

tion of the community, material as well as spiritual, visibly improves; for prayer, which is the laying hold of vital forces, the getting in touch with essential, universal power, or in accustomed words, *communion with the Divine*, whether it be moulded into meditation, or crystalized into verbal formulas, has ever been and must ever remain the mighty channel by which God-life and light and truth are imparted to the human soul. It is not merely an act of devotion and of worship, but the pabulum of the spirit, the immortal food by which it grows, the manna of the philosopher as well as of the Christian mystic.

At the period of life with which we have now to deal, the powerful effect of the spiritual new birth, the mental rejuvenescence conferred by prayer, is clearly visible in the work of our missionary. From those who dwell nearest the heart of Father Vally, he can no longer conceal the fact that his overstrained constitution is about to succumb beneath the incessant toil of his arduous labors. But as the fingers of decay leave their first impress upon his mortal frame, the vigorous soul-life of the man burns with in-

creasing brilliancy, its innate power repelling, retarding, almost nullifying the action of disease. Under the influence of prayer's Divine infusion, new powers awake, and new capacities evince themselves as the body totters to its fall. So truly is the spirit of the just man the master of his physical nature, that his mental perceptions grow clearer and more unerring, as the veil of the flesh begins to quiver beneath the strong touch of the hand of Death, and Eternal Truth casts its divine reflection upon the dissolving fabric.

Heretofore, the financial success of Louis Vally in the honor of the King, and for the improvement of his demesne, has been due rather to the winning simplicity of the missionary's nature,—a candid trust in his fellow creatures that compelled response and awakened an answering chord in every spirit—than to any especial faculty for financiering. But now, born of the very guilelessness of heart that looks on God, is the marked capacity for monetary matters manifested by the missionary at this time. The son of Lavaudieu becomes the business man, and a yet abler steward of the possessions of the Mas-

ter. The material prosperity of the Meridian mission increases the income of the little presbytery, but with the abiding instinct of the shepherd, every dollar of his exchequer not required for stern necessity, is devoted by the pastor of St. Patrick's to the poor and the infirm of the parish.

A human life was ordained by the Creator to resemble a perfect day; as each descends unto the West, new beauties and nobler splendors should attend it. Beyond the earthly horizon of them both, glows the uncreated loveliness of God, and the flush thereof should touch the spirit, like the occident, to unimagined glory.

As the luminance of the Infinite falls mantle-wise about the fading form of the self-sacrificing missionary, his ebbing vitality is wrought into love, love that has power to shield and warm and comfort and uplift all who come in contact with him at this period.

The High Mass on Sunday, that sublime ceremonial of the great Archpriest so dear to the soul of the pastor of Meridian, is now a painful exertion to our missionary, whose perishing body like an instrument which note by note grows

dumb, fails nerve by nerve to respond to the motions of the spirit.

One day, warned by suffering that his earthly stewardship is nearly at an end, the King's servant summons the Master's little ones around him. Standing in the midst of his Sovereign's most precious trust, the members of the "First Communion" class, the son of the Vallys speaks to them as he has never spoken before. Drawing every hour nearer to the Source of wisdom and of knowledge, an unwonted power, akin to eloquence, anoints the lips of our missionary. The children hang breathless upon his words. A sacred awe enfolds them; the most thoughtless becomes sensible of some unwonted Presence in their midst. It is the vigil of Pentecost, and the stirrings of the Spirit are almost palpable, as it animates the soul of the catechist, and moves within the hearts of his youthful listeners. Sweeter, more fervent, and more tender become Father Vally's words, and his countenance takes on an unwonted loveliness akin to supernatural. A sudden light is born upon his face, as though some revelation of the milk-white dove were breathed into his ear. The missionary is about

to speak once more, to communicate the glorious message to his children; but ere his lips can frame his words, a deadly pallor sweeps across the countenance dulling all its sublime luminance. Grasping the altar rail to prevent himself from falling, Louis Vally totters toward the little sacristy and sinks upon a chair; the spirit of him to do stern battle against the flesh.

A dreary week succeeds the above prostration of the pastor of St. Patrick's, during which he lies helpless upon his couch in the presbytery, waiting, almost longing, for the summons that does not come. But the hour of his passing has not yet struck, and upon the eighth day following that of his seizure in the church, he arises once more, and resumes for the short Indian Summer of his strength, the beloved duties of his stewardship.

The bud-like loveliness of spring unfolds into the full blown rose of summer; and one bright, but sultry day thereof, our missionary, who is confessor extraordinary to the Daughters of Catherine Mac-Auley at St. Joseph's Convent in Jackson, Mississippi, reaches the little capital, where he will join Rev. Henry Picherit, and go

from thence to the annual exhibition at St. Francis Xavier's Academy in Vicksburg.

The early part of the afternoon wears away, as the son of Lavaudieu sits in the Great Tribunal, pouring from its inexhaustible Fountain, the life-giving waters upon the spirits of the devoted community. The journey from Meridian has left him singularly fatigued, and now, slightly flushed, and somewhat spent with weariness, he seeks the side altar and kneels before the statue of his Queen. The nave of the church is already in darkness, but one spot of sunset glory burns upon the West, where the lingering radiance gathers itself into a glowing lotus, and from the vast heart streams upward, incense wise, the eerie luminance of the afterglow. The light falls through the stained glass window, weaving a rainbow-like nimbus above the Mother-Maid. The hour, the solitude, stand as ministering angels beside the overwrought missionary. The iridescent glory weaves a veil that separates the soul of him for the nonce, from the world of men, enclosing it within the realm of spirit. . . . Is it the effect of the mystic light, or does the Queen of Heaven stretch forth her sweet right

hand in gentle invitation to the steward of her Son? The rush of many wings seems filling all the ambient air, as the missionary falls prostrate before his Queen.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE GATES AJAR

After a fleeting glimpse between the half opened portals of the New Jerusalem, the spirit of the son of Lavaudieu, made strong by the effulgence from the throne, kindles once more the brain of the sufferer to consciousness, and Louis Vally finds himself in the parlor of the Jackson Convent, tended by Rev. A. Oliver, and the Daughters of Catherine Mac-Auley.

The news that their shepherd had been stricken, flashed over the electric wires to the little flock in Meridian, and borne on a special train, ten of its members, accompanied by Rev. B. O'Reilly, who had temporary charge of the church, and two of the Sisters of Mercy, from St. Aloysius' Academy, rush as fast as steam can bear them, to the aid of the cherished friend and pastor of them all. In the heart of each, is the hope that the beloved parent-priest may have sufficient strength to return with them to his home; in

the heart of each is likewise the growing fear that the King's servant will have received his summons ere he can be reached by the people of his predilection. Like a moth from its chrysalis, intelligence emerges from the mental dark; and when the missionary opens his eyes again upon the light, the familiar forms of his own parishioners stand beside his couch. Turning to the Sister of Mercy by his side, he wonderingly inquires: "How did you get here, my sister? Take me home, take me home at once."

In his strong excitement, the little father raises himself upon his elbow; as he does so, the great gash received when he fell in the church, striking his head against the sharp edge of the altar, begins to bleed afresh. Seeing this, the Sister presses him gently back upon the pillows.

From dark until dawn, "Catholic Knights," that gallant body-guard of the King, keep watch beside the invalid,—himself his Sovereign's knight—the gentle Galahad of the truth.

Day comes again, a royal day of June. Like an Oriental queen, she rises in the East, trails her blazing robes across the heavens, gathers them closely round her in a golden column for

her noonday pose mid-air, then spreading them fold on fold athwart the West, descends unto her twilight chambers.

Meanwhile, within the convent parlor, our missionary has rested well; a deep and healing sleep has visited his couch, and in consequence of the same, and the invalid's earnest request, preparations have been made to remove him home,—back to the people who have become in very deed his life-blood, and to whom he has given life more abundantly in the systole and diastole of love and inspiration.

It is now the 28th of June, of the year 1898. Midsummer unfolds like a mighty poppy, breathing intoxicating, enervating incense upon nature, and on men. Soon, Sirius will burn, a living jewel in the heavens. The great heat becomes almost tangible, and folds like a fiery shroud about the exhausted frame of Louis Vally, as the carriage which has met the Jackson train, stops at the gate of the little Meridian presbytery. Borne upon the arms of his parishioners, the pastor of St. Patrick's reenters his home. Once within the familiar walls, sweet peace descends upon his spirit, and when the summer night falls

gently down, Louis Vally slumbers long and dreamlessly, his weary heart beating softly for his people, his people's hearts throbbing anxiously for him.

Morning comes apace; the little English sparrows twitter blithely in the trees of the churchyard, and the fresh rose-scented breath of the dawn plays like a benediction above the couch of the invalid. Through the window, now opened by the Sister of Mercy in attendance, the dazzling blue of the heavens is seen. Thrilled with the life and the joy of the season and the hour, the missionary's comrade and coworker, Charlie, pushes his sagacious head through the casement, and gazes with almost human pity upon his prostrate master. Raising himself to a sitting posture, Louis Vally rests his emaciated hand on the horse's neck. As he does so, a responsive neigh rolls through the little apartment, startling the Sister of Mercy on duty, and causing her to spill a few drops of the medicine she is pouring for the invalid.

As the hours wear on, the glad presage of the morning seems realized, the missionary continues to rally, it may be that the shepherd will guide

his fold for yet a little while. When the shadows begin to gather, however, and the weird, mysterious shadows of the twilight issue from their dusky homes, a sudden weakness blanches the face of Louis Vally once more, and dim forgetfulness draws its veil across his faculties. As the holy hour of midnight strikes, the missionary's senses are wrapped in sleep,—a sleep so quiet that the watcher almost fears the passing of the shepherd into the outer Calm.

Hastily, the young assistant priest, Rev. Father Greimel, is summoned. Soon the little room is transformed into an audience chamber, for the King comes forth to sustain his servant. The life-giving oil sinks into the flesh of the invalid, renewing his spirit like crystal dew. Beneath its virile influence, the bud of love blooms into ecstasy, and the half-blown flowers of faith and hope unfold to perfect amaranths. The years of his sojourn in the American Mission roll back from the burning heart of the stricken pastor, consciousness gradually returns, the musical language of his native land leaps once more to his lips, and the mighty vigor of the Extreme Unction, flashing its glories through the soul,

exalts, transforms, rejuvenates, the wasted body of him, likewise, into the transient semblance of health. For one bright, mystical moment, the gates of the New Jerusalem, wherein the Eternal David reigneth, stand ajar, and the being of the Vallys' son is bathed in the uncreated light thereof. "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." But the guardian spirits close the portals, and the Sovereign, denying His servant for the nonce, entrance into the Golden City, sends the gentlest of His angels to bring him human sleep.

Thus, sometimes, conscious of the bloom and beauty of midsummer, sometimes wandering amid spirit lands where every flower is sweet with God, and the whispers of the King are heard along the silver streams, the son of Lavaudieu lives on in intermittent suffering, ministered unto, by day, by the Daughters of Catherine Mac-Auley; by night, by the sorrowing members of his little flock.

The feast of the Assumption is at hand. As the royal festival, his Sovereign Lady's day,

draws near, new strength courses like wine through the emaciated frame of the missionary, and subtle force thrilled from the heart of the Queen of Angels, animates his mind and spirit. The resistless desire to work, to labor once more ere his "Nunc Dimittis" is said, burns like a fierce fever through the soul and body of Louis Vally. Calling for his stole, the insignia he loved best, the missionary raises himself upon his pillows, and the Spirit broods above the cot, as the Sisters of Mercy kneel beside the improvised tribunal. The people, hearing that their pastor will again listen, and in all human probability, for the last time, to their sorrows and their sins, flock to the presbytery, and prostrate themselves in gladness and in love before the stricken shepherd, the sweet odor of whose life becomes an ever richer fragrance as the vessel that contains it is broken by the hand of physical suffering.

The character of man, molded by labor and sacrifice and the action of Divine inspiration, polished by love and by tears into a perfect sphere, must show the finely-cut tracery of patience before its beauty is complete. Hitherto,

the life of Louis Vally has been the pursuit of ideals,—through difficulties, dangers, sufferings, it is true, but the joy, the stimulus of action has rarely been taken from him. Now the ardent, aspiring soul of the missionary is harassed and circumvented by a perishing organism, and in this condition lies the crucial test of the spiritual metal of the son of Lavaudieu. Many heroes can dare and struggle, can hew a pathway to their ends through the granite heart of adverse environment, but few men grow to their perfect spiritual stature when disabled by disease from familiar fields of action. Yet so surely as the seed must abide in the darkness and the desolation of the mold, awaiting the touch of the elemental forces to cause it to germinate, and to bring it forth a green and perfect plant, so must the human soul, in patience and in passivity, be withdrawn at times from the labors of its lot and in a solemn Sabbath of silence and self-abnegation await the living breath of its Creator. And with a strength derived from its mighty source, the soul of Louis Vally waits, and waiting receives new peace and power.

Meanwhile, the people throng the Sovereign's

audience chamber, and ask the boon of the shepherd's life. A novena of public prayer is offered to the Queen of Heaven, for the well-beloved steward of her Son. It is the eve of the Assumption,—the vigil of her coronation, and largess must be given to the people.

The festival dawns, and fine exhilaration fills the hearts of the little flock, as the missionary, leaving his bed for the first time, is led to the King's antechamber, and seated in an easy chair, assists at the great Sacrifice. This transient recoil of disease, routed by the resistless might of spiritual forces, constitutes the Indian summer of his life. The pallid crystals of the death-frost are forming, but the fervid sun of Louis Vally's soul, battling with the powers of decay, gives the semblance of vigor to his mortal frame. His people's hopes revive in the delusive sunlight, but the steward has heard the Master's summons, and knows that the winter of his sojourn is close at hand, and that the earth mother must claim her offering,—the fading body of him.

All deep emotions are calm, all crises of spirit and of nature silent; and the life of man, issuing from the glorious calm of one eternity, is merged

again into the other, having sounded meanwhile, the magical gamut of earthly experiences and emotions. And as the mystic shadows of the Infinite begin to fall about the failing priest, a deeper serenity comes to mind and heart, and the strong tendrils of his affections, gradually detaching themselves from his earthly environment, twine more closely about the immutable glories of his King. Hitherto, to live, to labor, to endure,—days of virile work, nights half consumed by toil, in the Sovereign's service, had been the desideratum of his spirit. Hitherto, his individuality, his very being, has merged so to speak, in the entities of his fellow creatures; now the development of his own spirit becomes a conscious development. Hitherto, the Master's work in other lives has been his primary thought; now the steward grows introspective, and looks more closely to the wonders wrought by the King within his individual nature. In achieving his work and his destiny, Louis Vally has heretofore trusted blindly to the Divine Artist, losing his life to find it. Now that the designs of the Master Workman in his own behalf are gradually unfolding before his keener spiritual

vision, a strong new yearning to be plastic to the Master's hand, to become, rather than to accomplish, to grow, rather than to build, floods all his being with desire. It is the impassive, and therefore the receptive state of the human soul, the magical condition-flower of grace, and fruit of prayer, in which the Supreme Spirit works its miracles. To die then, to the body, to put off the armor of battle and follow the King into His sealed Council Chamber, in brief, to do the Master's will, and accomplish His plans by inaction instead of labor, becomes the supreme necessity to Louis Vally, and absorbs and exhilarates his faculties. It is the perfect conformity of the creature to the inscrutable designs of the Creator.

In this exalted spiritual mood, the servant who has erstwhile actively served and sought the King, finds himself in an especial manner sought and favored by his Sovereign. The daily vigils in the audience chamber of the little church, are now impossible, because of physical weakness. And so, the Master comes unto His steward's house, and brings His royal gifts to make glorious the sufferer's spirit. Small wonder, there-

fore, that at this crisis, our missionary, encouraged by his people to hope for a yet longer span of human life, invariably replies,—"My Sovereign's will is always best."

Saint and sage, prophet and priest, philosopher and scientist reecho the answer around the world; and the mighty truth, ascending through the spheres unto the utmost heaven is repeated by the fire-lipped seraphim near the throne.

Drives through the royal midsummer woods can now be taken by the invalid, and the glowing panorama of meadow-land and forest utters sublime gospels to his spirit, deepening a thousandfold the profound love of nature,—so integral a part of his being in these, the farewell days among her scenes.

From the commodious presbytery among the Vicksburg hills, Rev. H. A. Picherit, the *cher ami* of Father Vally, sends an urgent invitation to the latter to become an inmate of his, Father Picherit's home, cherishing the frail hope that the climate of the Hill City and the companionship of a fellow countryman will rivet anew the weakening bonds of the flesh that but feebly detain the fluttering spirit of the King's steward.

Sweet is the music of his native tongue to the ear of the missionary exile; and inspiring the harmonies of perfect friendship and understanding that flow between the devoted compatriots. But difficult breathing on the part of the invalid guest begins to make prolonged conversation impossible. The buoyant talks, the mutual reminiscences, dear and sad, must be exchanged for a monody on the part of the Vicksburg pastor, with but rare verbal response from the son of Lavaudieu. For thirty years, the great Atlantic waste has flowed between Louis Vally and his native shores; now, the solemn tides of silence lave his heart, bearing it steadily onward to,—the birthland of the human soul.

In the heart of the picturesque "Hill City," stand the noble buildings of St. Francis Xavier's Convent, the mother house of the Sisters of Mercy, in the state of Mississippi. The beautiful chapel thereof is a favorite dwelling place of the King. The snowy lilies that garland the central arch burst into pure flame when the Sovereign comes out upon His throne. There, the flowers linger long, as though loth to leave so sweet a spot, and the incense, fragrant

aftermath of prayer, hovers, like a spirit in the air for dim and holy hours after Benediction. Up the altar steps of this fair and fragrant fane, Louis Vally totters feebly, when his now fast ebbing strength will permit him to stand. Upon the celebration of the tremendous Sacrifice, every faculty of his being is concentrated. Spirit and intellect and will are inebriated by supreme desire for that transcendent union with the Divine, effected by the mighty Mystery of the Species. Almost falling on the altar one morning, he is begged to desist from the daily Mass; at the mere suggestion, a delusive vigor permeates voice and frame, and with solemn emphasis he exclaims;—"Ask me anything but to fail to meet my King, at Consecration, during the few days that remain to me on earth."

One still evening in late summer, after an hour of solemn reverie,—an hour when the spirit of the King's steward was closeted with the King, an expression of utter melancholy darkened the mobile features of the missionary, falling cloud-like upon their habitual sunny peace. Noting the change and the shadow, a Sister of Mercy with whom he had been convers-

ing, places her hand quietly upon the emaciated ones of the invalid, and speaks to him bright words of hope for a return of physical strength. "My daughter," and the sorrowful eyes of Louis Vally utter gentle reproach as he answers, "nay, you know that is not so, and you likewise mistake my grief. I have long since heard my summons;—the Master's will be done. I mourn not for my departed strength, but for my past."

"Your past! my Father," exclaims the amazed religious, "your past has been as the past of yonder lily, a time of pure and perfect growth,—the following of the motions of the Spirit, the perpetual correspondence with the Master's inspirations. You have used your talents well, the King——" "What is all that before the Infinite, my daughter?" The voice of Meridian's pastor is vibrant with emotion. "I have been a priest of God for thirty years; if in that time I have had but one shortcoming daily,—but one disloyal wish or thought, the King's ambassador has strangely failed." Her utterance choked by sobs, the Sister of Mercy answers not, but points silently to the picture of the Man of Sorrows above the mantel. His human heart aflame with

immeasurable tenderness for humanity his brethren, the face of the Sinless One seems to shed reproach upon the son of Lavaudieu; softly its message flashes home to the soul of Louis Vally. Upon his spirit, the supreme truth of Christian philosophy bursts in sun-like grandeur. By faith is man made whole. God's strength shall arm thy weakness, God's love shall supply thy inefficiency.

Exquisite joy bathes the soul of the invalid in light, chasing the gloom from heart and feature, permeating his being with celestial radiance. It is the supreme development of the spirit during its earthly probation, the zenith of its power, the ultimatum of its possibilities in the mortal state. Softly the guardians of the heavenly portals swing the glittering gates once more ajar; this time unveiling more dazzling glory to the ravished spirit of the missionary. For one great, swift moment, the face of Louis Vally is bright with inspiration. "And He that sat upon the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new. . . . I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.'"

The whole man has become transformed, and a note of triumph rings through his voice, as the invalid speaks once more to the Sister of Mercy :—

"You are right, my daughter; all will be well, nay, all is well, now and forevermore."

And thus the shepherd of Lavaudieu, because of his unquestioning conformity with the designs of the Great Shepherd, has been led step by step up the sublime pathway of spiritual evolution, until it stands upon the threshold of the Holy of Holies.

Dull, sodden, depressing to human vision, dawns the sorrowful day when Rev. Henry Picherit, with the tenderness of a parent for its stricken little one, aids Louis Vally to prepare for his journey back to Meridian. Without, all is dull and cheerless, and the landscape seems one vast sob, but within the heart of the sufferer dwells immortal sunshine, though his eyes are dim with tears and his voice is broken with emotion. The sojourn in the Vicksburg presbytery was the last feeble hope to which his people clung, but the garment of his flesh was already loosened, and neither time nor change has power to regird the corrupting fabric around the soul. But one de-

sire now remains to our missionary,—the desire to return to his little flock, and then,—to the King.

A last, almost silent visit is made by Louis Vally to the convent of "St. Francis Xavier," from the doors of which, nearly a quarter of a century before, had issued the soldiers of sacrifice at his call, the soldiers who had fought the Master's battles by his (Louis Vally's) side.

Mutely, the sad-faced nuns glide into the Oratory where a great armchair has been wheeled for the invalid. One by one, with reverence akin to awe, they kiss the pallid hands of the beloved father-friend, then,—then, with common impulse, kneel to receive his farewell blessing.

So still the great, dim apartment, that one can almost hear the heart-throbs of the Christ from His Tabernacle barely ten yards distant. The white robes of Mary Immaculate glimmer and seem to stir in the shadowy niche at the left of the altar, and from Mother and Son comes the same voiceless message, that reached the soul of Louis Vally in the Trappist Monastery of Gethsemane:—"There are no partings for those who dwell in God."

Followed by the entire community, supported, almost carried, by Rev. Henry Picherit, the son of Simon and Marie Vally descends the convent steps, and turning, casts a look of yearning tenderness upon the building. "For the last time," he murmurs almost inaudibly, only those nearest him hearing the whisper. But the quick ear of Father Picherit catches it, and the arm that supports the invalid trembles perceptibly.

A half hour of waiting in the dingy depot, while a fine drizzle saturates the air, and breeds ill odors in the stuffy, tobacco-reeking apartment. Half an hour! during which the friends live vital moments charged with love, fraught with infinite significance. Each knows that when he meets his brother once again, it will be in the visible presence of the Eternal Friend.

As the train steams into the depot, Henry Picherit strains the pastor of Meridian to his heart, resigns him to the care of the gentlemen who are to attend him upon his journey, and turning swiftly away, departs in silence.

And between the exiles, fall the shadow and the mystery of the tomb.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### TABOR

THE hand of the Master Musician, evoking the great symphony of a noble life, now touches the final chord of the earth history of the son of Lavaudieu. A period of physical exhaustion follows his return journey to Meridian. Then the golden day of "All Saints," ripening like a perfect fruit upon the immortal orchard of the King, brings with it a slight return of vigor to the invalid, as though the strong life throbbing from the countless hosts of the Redeemed, permeated all his being with a foretaste of eternal power and joy. Once more the steward can seek the temporal audience-chamber of the Master; once more, in the little chapel of St. Aloysius' convent, the all-compelling words are uttered, and the Supreme Power of the Universe responds instantly to the call of the perishing child of the dust, because of the imperishable Image that dwells within the mask of clay. Sustained at

the vital moments by the power of his spirit, the overtaxed frame of the celebrant totters as the Rite draws to its end. At its conclusion, Louis Vally is led by an attendant back to the little chamber that in a few days will prove his "Janua Coeli." The son of Simon and Marie has passed beyond human aid, and despite the almost paternal care of Dr. Lowry, physician and friend, the end comes slowly, and the Death Angel stands upon the threshold.

Two or three days of increasing weakness, and the servant at last, must lay him down upon the couch, to await the coming of his Lord.

The glory of Indian summer has faded into the gray of chill November days, which follow each other like pallid mourners at the bier of the year. But the windows of the sick man's chamber are thrown wide to admit the cutting air, for the life-breath comes with difficulty to the sufferer.

And his people gather,—the sheep of this shepherd; and they press about him, touching his bloodless hands with their lips, striving, by the strength of their great love to detain his spirit in its mortal habitation.

But another and a greater love is drawing the soul of the missionary into its all encompassing soul. And patiently, cheerily, joyously, the King's steward abandons himself unto the King.

His scanty earthly goods are now to be disposed of; and calling in the man of the law, he bequeathes the shining vestments brought from his native land, and regarded as his most precious possession, to whoso shall succeed him as ambassador of the Most High in the little mission. The royal Chalice (once the treasure of a venerable archbishop of Paris), that has so often held the thrice royal Blood of the Lamb, is likewise left, a priceless heritage, to the next shepherd of the Meridian flock, with the request that the Supreme Oblation should be offered fifty times for the spirit of Louis Vally.

A knight by nature in the chivalry of the King, the dying missionary is likewise a knight by name, as for years he has worn the simple insignia of that strong and growing order, the "Catholic Knights of America." In this association, his life has been insured; and the insurance in question is now left by his testament for the education of a young seminarian,—the train-

ing of an aspiring and vigorous spirit for the Order of Melchizedek.

"I would be buried by my people; buried as a poor man with the humble paraphernalia that would enclose the dust of the least among them;" replies the missionary when asked to indicate his final wishes,—"In life I have owned nothing but my King's commission; in death I would have nothing save His glory."

And those around him answer not, for all the place seems bright with God.

The perishing body of Louis Vally begins to gasp, almost to sob for breath. The Spirit of Suffering presses her burning brow upon his heart. Solid nourishment becomes impossible, only a little food now binds the feeble dust garment to the soul. Agony stands by night at the invalid's pillow, and so great becomes the travail of the flesh that the Sister of Mercy, watching his bedside, steals silently out to bring the priest and the great Death Unction, for the spirit of the shepherd about to tear itself from its earthly moorings. But all the while, although he has entered, indeed, the "Valley of the Shadow," Reason lifts her holy torch on high, and

Consciousness looks calmly through the weary eyes of the sufferer.

Rev. Sylvester Greimel comes anon,—a young man newly signed with the sign of the priesthood; and the steward, standing at the gate of the King's earthly vineyard, anoints the steward upon the threshold of His uncreated Throne. Ever the royal tree of Levi must bourgeon and bloom, dispensing salvation as sweet odor through creation, bearing the golden fruit of Truth from generation to generation. Priest must follow priest, life must follow life, human sacrifice, and heart oblations, and holocausts of human wills must follow each other in an unbroken succession, until the sun shall perish, and the earth falls back into the bosom of its Maker. Priests must die, but the priesthood lives! The branches of Levi perish, the root, Levi, is immortal! "Gather in and call all my senses unto Thee;" repeats the feeble voice of the Vallys' son, as a Daughter of Catherine Mac-Auley reads, between her tears, his favorite chapter from the Imitation. "Gather in and call all my senses home unto Thee," echoes the bounding heart of the sufferer. "Gather in and call all my being unto

Thee," pleads the eager spirit of the dying missionary, panting, longing, for eternal day.

"Behold!" continues the reader, "to the saints it shineth, glowing with everlasting brightness."

"To the saints it shineth," sobs the heart; "To me it beckoneth," cries the soul of Louis Vally. "Succor me, O Thou Everlasting Truth."

"My whole desire sigheth after Thee," the Sister of Mercy reads on.

And echoed by the heart, and a thousand times reechoed by the spirit of the son of Lavaudieu, the words of supreme yearning ring upon the Throne.

Turning upon his pillow, the missionary sleeps the trance-like sleep of exhaustion. He must wait,—the hour of liberty is yet delayed.

When Louis Vally wakes once more, there are many kneeling around his couch to each of whom he gives comfort and the fulness of benediction.

A young maiden, one of the five of his especial adoption, seizes his hand, and cries aloud in the keen agony of girlhood:—"Father, do not leave us—here—alone." "My child," the missionary's

voice sounds strangely clear and strong upon the deep hush of the room, "my little one, I go to that home I have tried to teach you to love."

And the maiden cannot answer, for her soul is sobbing now.

The heart of Louis Vally bleeds afresh, but the King comes to him in Sacramental union, bringing "Solid peace, peace secure and undisturbed, peace within and peace without."

About the spirit, and reflected upon the countenance of the dying man there shines so fair a light, caught from the glory of the transfigured Christ, that the hearts of the mourners within the silent chamber, exclaim with the Apostles upon the Wonderful Mountain; "Lord, it is good for us to be here."

And this light, which is power and peace, will never more depart from the shepherd of Lavaudieu, though the woe of his body is exceedingly great, and the Spirit of Suffering folds him yet closer in her embrace.

From the core of his spirit, the love light springs to the fading eyes of the missionary, as he presses his rapturous kisses upon the transfixed Saviour, his deep emotion finds utterance:

"Oh! what a loving God He has been to me!"

Silent, weeping, sobbing, his people continue to gather,—a human stream, a tide of sorrowing souls, flowing all day beside his couch, flowing all day into his heart, flooding his spirit to the brim with the living waters of affection. And from dawn to dusk, within the little church, the prayers of the flock for its shepherd, ascend before the King like incense from an inexhaustible thurible. Mindful, even in the last agonized moments of love and gentle courtesy, the son of the Vallys constrains his feeble voice to dictate words of gratitude to be written to the many who have sent offerings of fruit and flowers to alleviate his sufferings.

A dreary octave of days has passed since the mighty Unction kindled the spirit of our missionary with uncreated joy. When asked, during that interval, whether any earthly desire yet remained to him, Louis Vally made answer: "If the King wills, I should like to live until Father Bekkers, my friend, returns from Holland."

Rev. J. B. Bekkers, now pastor of the Meridian mission, and shepherd of the flock, gathered,

nurtured, and purified by the life-work of the son of Lavaudieu, is likewise a self-elected exile from home and kindred, and has been an apostolic laborer in the Master's virgin field, the souls of the sorrowful remnant of the Indians of North America.

Between Louis Vally and Bartholomew Bekkers a close and mutually inspiring friendship has existed. And now, the dying pastor of St. Patrick's longs with a deep longing to behold his comrade and colaborer once more. And the Eternal Lover of them both, having heard the simple wish, guides the bark of the traveler safely through the sea, guides the steps of the missionary from Holland tenderly through the perils of the land, until they pause beside the couch of the missionary from Lavaudieu.

The embrace a strong man gives to a beloved brother,—the kiss a strong man presses upon a dying comrade's brow, and the first shock of the meeting is over.

Exhausted almost to prostration, Louis Vally falls heavily back upon his pillows, and the sturdy arms of the Dutch priest steal protectingly about the emaciated shoulders of the son

of France, drawing the weary head of the dying man caressingly to his breast. Through a blinding mist of tears, the friends look silently at one another. Then, as though some subtle request had been made by spirit to spirit, Bartholomew Bekkers gently withdraws his embrace from the sufferer, and hastily leaves the sick chamber. In a few moments, he returns, bearing to his comrade their mutual Lord. And with the Christ between them,—the seal and significance of every perfect friendship, the comrades look once more into one another's eyes,—into one another's souls. And beholding the look, the Sister of Mercy in attendance, bends low above the couch, and while the King enters the eager heart of Louis Vally, tells the rosary of her tears.

Saturday evening comes, and long after sunset, a shimmering, gauze-like light is drawn across the west, as though Nature were robing for her Sabbath bridal with the Lord. Through the quiet and the gold, sounds the Angelus bell, "and all the hour is sweet with prayer." Suddenly, upon the holy calm, the voice of the invalid,—grown strong and clear—is heard by the watching Daughter of Catherine Mac-Auley ;—

"Sister, what boon shall I ask of the King for you, when I reach our heavenly home?" Starting from her golden revery upon her Spouse, the Bride of the Lamb replies:—"Request that in His Kingdom, I too, may dwell beside my Lord." "Even so, my daughter, then will I entreat that you and all His spouses in this community, who have been my hands and feet during these weary months, may be gathered into the Mansion of His Love."

Deep, still night comes down, every hour an Angel of Strong Agony draining his chalice at the lips of the sufferer. Every hour, likewise, an Angel of Light, bringing power, and peace, and keenness to his faculties. The spirit's triumph is at hand, and touching with the wand of its supremacy, the quivering, agonized flesh, the body becomes a fine instrument upon which the intellect and will of the dying man play wondrous harmonies. Gethsemane is passed, and the vision of Tabor, breaking upon the dark, kindles, like the slowly rising moon, all the being of the dying man to glory. Still, the Spirits of Suffering gather about the couch of Louis Vally, poising their chalices so that not one dreg shall

escape untasted, but the Spirits of Light are more powerful, and the whole frame of the missionary glows with the ecstasy of the Divine. "Can we do anything for you, my Father?" asks the Sister of Mercy, when for one awful moment the Spirits of Suffering seem triumphant. "Only tell me, my Daughter, tell me often, that this great agony is the will of the King."

The fair and sacred prophecy of the dawn lies on the east; and the wide calm that precedes sunrise, broods, dove-like, above the world. A brief, but sweet respite comes to the son of the Vallys,—a precious moment during which the Spirits of Suffering retreat, and the Spirits of Light draw near and minister unto him.

Raising himself upon his elbow, the dying man turns his face unto the east, just faintly kindled with the day, as the vast wings of a seraph might kindle, when out of measureless distance they catch the awful glory that burns around the throne.

And as he looks, the morning breaks, earth and heaven are transfigured. Flaming banners unfurl from horizon to zenith, as though the armies of the Lord were marching up the east, each battalion bearing pennons of living light.

"O! King," exclaims the joyous spirit of our missionary, "it is good for me to be here!" And again the King makes answer: "It is good."

And the lips of the sufferer voice the ecstasy of his soul: "What a beautiful day is at hand!" Turning to the young man,—a member of the Catholic Knights, in attendance, Louis Vally requests: "Change my garments, my son, make me ready for my people. They will come to me after the High Mass."

And as they robe him for the visit of his flock, his spirit is quietly unloosing the frail cordage of the flesh,—silently clothing itself in robes of uncreated splendor. Over the countenance of the dying priest, the passing soul draws its reverent death mist like a veil.

A Sister of Mercy, who reenters the death chamber after a brief absence, beholds the supreme change, and sobbingly questions the sufferer: "My Father, how do you feel?"

"So weak, my daughter, oh! so very weak."

"Surely we may do something for you!"

"Yes, I need much air, my child,—open the inner door." Returning to the couch, the Daughter of Catherine Mac-Auley presses the Crucifix

once more to the lips of the dying man. One kiss for the royal feet—one kiss for each of the pierced hands—one kiss for the broken heart—and—the inner door has opened—the shepherd stands in the presence of the King.

As the spirit enters the eternal audience chamber, the triumphant notes of the Preface fly like seraphim through the open windows of the church, where High Mass is being sung, and hover around the bed,—now the bier of the pastor of St. Patrick's: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth." And from the celestial places the angelic choirs, thrones, dominations, powers, virtues, principalities, cherubim, seraphim, angels and archangels, with one accord repeat: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!"

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE KING'S TOKEN

*And when the faithful servant stood in the Sovereign's presence, the King stretched forth His hand, and removing the Royal Token, which, during his earth life, the missionary had worn upon his heart, set it as a jewel upon the brow of the beloved steward. And the light thereof shone afar, even unto the uttermost ends of the King's dominions; and the name of the Token is Love.*

And the exceeding beauty of the Token, and a faint reflection of its radiance glows even upon the abandoned tenement of clay,—the body of the steward, that lies in the King's earthly audience chamber, the little church of St. Patrick, wrapped in an eternal calm.

Ever, during his mortal pilgrimage, the seal wherewith the redeemed are sealed,—love—love for all animate life, love that draweth love as the magnet draweth the needle—had dwelt within the soul, and been worn as an imperial

signet upon the heart of Louis Vally, revealing itself at times through eye and voice and gesture, revealing its presence always in the long immolation of his life. Now, upon the white, dead brow of the sleeper, *Love*, the beautiful golden *Seal of the King*, shines gloriously, and looking upon the Token, a great tenderness surges like a mighty sea over the hearts of his bereaved people.

They have lain him in the church of his predilection,—the church of his building, his Master's House,—and at the feet of his Lord. Here, in the shadowy aisle, for twilight comes apace, the candles gleam and glitter like the brows of seraphim at prayer. Here, in the shadowy aisle, the silent procession of the people moves mournfully along, the great hush broken, anon, by the low, half stifled sob of some aged mourner, whose staff of life the departed shepherd has ever been. It is as though the heart of Sorrow were bleeding, bleeding and breaking upon the icy heart of Death.

And up the twilight aisles comes night; the watchers who are to keep guard during the still dark hours begin to arrive, and gently, almost

tenderly press back the mute and mournful multitude,—press them to the door of the church which is softly closed and now—the vigil with Silence and with the Dead.

The members of the Catholic Knights, beloved brethren of the deceased, have been appointed to keep watch, and reverently they fulfill their trust,—less a watch beside the clay of Louis Vally, than communion with the spirit of the knightly shepherd just beyond the Veil.

It is now the morning of Wednesday,—the third dawn since the Sabbath sunrise that witnessed the passing of the son of Lavaudieu. The interim has been given to his people, to their love and to their grief. Now, the body of him must be laid to rest,—pressed back into the home of nature, to regenerate the earth, to pass through strong mutations; in time, itself to be gloriously regenerated.

The last preparations have been made; and the saints and prophets upon the stained glass windows of the little church begin to thrill with glory at the electric touch of dawn upon the day of the final ceremonies.

As on the occasions of the dedication of St.

Patrick's, and the more recent festival of the Silver Jubilee, for this golden triumph of the French missionary, all of his brother laborers, pastors who can leave their parishes for a brief span of time, assembled to give the final tribute of honor to their departed comrade.

The clustered candles shine star-like in the sable sconces,—for the day is dark and a light rain falling. From pillar to pillar, from arch to arch, from window to window, are festooned the sombre draperies; but above them, waved by hands invisible, immortal palm and laurel boughs sway to the voices of celestial lutes, whose fine and far off melody is felt, though heard not, by all who surround the bier.

The robes of the celebrants at the altar,—of the Right Reverend Bishop Heslin; of Henry Picherit, archpriest; of Florimond Blanc, deacon; of Bartholomew Bekkers, subdeacon; of James McCafferty, master of ceremonies; are of deepest black, but the garments of the celestial witnesses who stand unseen amid the throng, have taken on new glory because of joy in the joy and the emancipation of the King's steward.

The *Benedictus*, *Sanctus*, and *Agnus Dei*, of

Gounod's "Solemn Mass of St. Cecilia," have chimed their mighty notes of praise and pleading like sweet and solemn bells of victory. Up in the choir loft, two voices the sleeping shepherd loved,—those of Mrs. Katie Allen and Miss Margaret Crowe of Meridian, both former pupils of the little catechism class, and the latter, one of Louis Vally's adopted five—have sung out the glorious themes. And up in the choir loft, that orphan of the dead priest's heart, sits heroically at the organ, evoking the grand harmonies while every note is a separate pain, every chord a strong agony threatening to overwhelm her soul and paralyze her body; for the quiet form in the aisle below was father and friend as well as pastor,—all that stood for joy and counsel, all that represented the tenderest parental care. What wonder then, if his "Pride," needs, herself, to be sustained? And sustained she is by the great love of the Supreme Parent to pay the last noble tribute to the guardian and foster father He had called unto Himself.

A solid mass of humanity fills the nave of the church, crowding the pews to their utmost capacity, and overflowing into the aisles, pressing

with the zeal of strong affection about the coffin of the dead priest. Some hearts among them know the tragedy that is enacting above in the choir; and tears, not for the deceased shepherd, but for the living orphan, spring to eyes long since unused to weeping. Pausing before the altar rail, the master of ceremonies bids the people come forward, and look for the last time upon their leader's face. With a reverence as though treading upon thrice holy ground, the immense congregation advances. Though closely packed to the inner doorway, nay, beyond it, on the little portico, down the front steps and into the street, no murmur of confusion arises from the vast multitude, no impatient act is seen, but heart beats against heart in the fraternal sympathy of a common sorrow. By every one present, the humanizing and refining power of the great love incarnate in the still form of the Vallys' son, is insensibly felt and made manifest in his conduct.

Still they come; the old and the infirm, the blind, the young, the poor, the rich, and the little ones. Mothers lift tiny babes in their arms, that looking upon the noble dead, a blessing may

descend from the children's friend. The weak and suffering draw nearer each moment, that from the wonderful power that emanates each moment from the *King's Token*, upon the brow of the sleeper, rest and soundness of body may come forth to them. Israelites, and Christians of every denomination wind their patient way to the silent form lying within its casket as upon a bed of unutterable joy. Unbelievers and the unreclaimed press forward to see whence issues the strange magnetism of the humble dead. The municipal authorities of the little town, the pastors of other flocks within the community, men of the law, physicians, and teachers in every profession, are among the silent, weeping multitude that surges about the coffin of the peasant-priest.

During the thirty years that the missionary labored among them, the subtle magic of the *King's Token*, the golden seal of immeasurable love wherewith the life of the Vallys' son was sealed, was so gently, so unobtrusively potent, that those within the circle of his teaching were but dimly conscious of its power upon their spirits.

Now that the "Man of the People" lies dead, the people recognize their own, and in its passing, the strong, uplifting influence that has been vouchsafed them, is, for the first time, adequately measured.

And as he sleeps, the son of Lavaudieu, with the golden chalice pressed to his silent heart, the holy vessel seems,—to the stirred souls of the multitude,—to brim once more with the Blood of the Lamb, the potent, saving blood, of which the dead priest has so long been the custodian in their midst. When the sacred vessel has been reverently removed, and the coffin-lid slides gently between the mild, still face of Louis Vally and the eyes of his people, a great sob arises from the soul of the multitude, but is soothed and glorified by the exquisite melody, "Within Thy Sacred Heart," that steals, like a ministering angel, out above the anguished congregation.

In the organ loft, the orphan's fingers wake the keys once more, and the orphan's heart makes each note a *Via Crucis;* but love nerves her voice, and it rings out in duet with another voice that sang the "Silver Jubilee," in the

hymn, "Within Thy Sacred Heart," set to the beautiful music of Charles Hennings of Mobile. It was the best loved hymn of the deceased, and is sung now in fulfilment of his own request.

"Within Thy Sacred Heart, dear Lord,
My anxious thoughts would rest;
I neither ask for life nor death,—
Thou knowest what is best.

"Say only Thou hast pardoned me,
Say only I am Thine;
In all things else dispose of me,
Thy holy will is mine."

Tenderly, Louis Vally's brethren of the priesthood lift the casket from the bier and bear it in mournful procession to the entrance of the church. Now, the Catholic Knights receive the precious burden; and the superb lament of the *Miserere* is entoned by the clergy. And still, as the funeral cortège moves on, the exquisite strains of "Within Thy Sacred Heart," fall pearl-like upon the solemn background of the magnificent dirge, heard now faintly, now distinctly, as the procession goes on its serpentine route to the churchyard.

Out into the gray morning, for the sky is yet overcast with clouds,—out upon the sodden

earth, and in the soft, penetrating rain, the sorrowful cortège winds slowly around the square. The *Miserere* swells and falls, gathers and dies, and is borne again, as though the woe of all ages has found voice, the vast sorrow of humanity been compressed into its awful harmony; as though the Spirit of Life had lain her down, powerless, conquered, by the Spirit of Death.

In a few moments, crushed beneath the sadness of heart and of sky and of psaltery, the mute multitude that follows the coffin feels the heavy gloom shutting out their spirits from the light. Entering the churchyard, the pungent odor of the newly turned sod, comes with sickening suggestion to the mourners. The fence has been removed that the people may find no obstruction, and ranging themselves into a close circle about the grave, they gaze tearfully into the yawning earth.

The Bishop of Natchez begins the solemn service; with thurible and Asperges the hallowed corpse is made more holy. Now the signal is given the pall-bearers to perform their office. For a moment they stand back, while a

perceptible recoil runs through the vast assemblage. *Can* they lay it there?—that clay so dear—the familiar form of the well beloved?

Dead?—Aye, dead; but not less dear. *Can* they leave the body of him in the mold beneath the lowering heavens?

"*Ashes to ashes; dust to dust?*" Aye, but not such dust as this. We would not lay it in the dark.

But as though the King of Life made answer:—"*Light!*" kindled somewhere in the heavens, a glorious sunbeam cuts the gloom and falls straight upon the coffin and the open grave.

"Not in the night of the sod, but in the day of immortality; not in death, but life; you leave him, oh! deluded sons of sorrow," speaks the voice of Eternal Truth.

And the souls of the people hear it. And before the all-compelling Word the shadows melt away, and Life and Light have conquered!

Not a human spirit in the great multitude but feels the thrill of heaven, and vibrates, for one supreme moment, to the power of the Word.

A joyous mocking-bird, enraptured with the unfolding day, intones a sudden song in the tree

just overhead. The crystal notes fall one by one upon the coffin, like a chorister's "*Alleluia.*"

High and clear and sweet they ring out; growing each moment, higher, clearer, sweeter,—a rainbow of melody mingling with the great sunbeam, until song and sun-ray seem woven into a mantle of glory that lies upon the homely casket of the dead.

A second signal of the Bishop to the pall-bearers,—a brief stir at the brink of the grave, while the mocking-bird sings with increasing ecstasy,—and earth has claimed her own.

Where the steward dwelt in life, he lies in death,—close to the feet of the King the body of him rests; his spirit has passed on to wider and sublimer fields of action.

Silently as it gathered, the multitude departs; now only one heart-crushed group remains, lingering to heap the generous gift of flowers upon the new-made mound,—flowers of all hues, of every sweetness, flowers brought by high and lowly, by old men and by babes. The duty over, they, too, leave the churchyard.

Silent, solitary, tearless, absorbed, Rev. Henry

Picherit stands beside the grave; *for always, in the universe of God is death the slave, and not the conqueror of love!*

# PART IV

"The path of the just is as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

Tomb of Rev. Louis Vally, Erected in 1900.

## CHAPTER XXV

### HE BEING DEAD, YET SPEAKETH

FIVE times the great tree in the Meridian churchyard has clothed itself in the pale green robe of spring, the emerald garb of summer, and the royal, many-colored mantle of autumn, since the dead heart of Louis Vally was laid in the little garden of the King's demesne.

Here, by the violet-covered mound, the silver voice of the altar bell can be plainly heard, as it daily announces the Royal Presence. Here, the mated mocking-bird still sings the requiem of the son of Lavaudieu, and here the hands of his people bring the most precious flowers the bounteous seasons yield. From January to December, the love offerings are laid upon the cherished mound, —blossoms, when blossoms make glad the world, and immortal evergreen when all the flowers sleep in God.

A monument of purest marble gleams to-day beneath the old tree's shade,—erected on Novem-

—"I would ask that when I have departed, my people will place a little tablet near the altar of the Virgin Queen, and carve thereon the words: —'Pray for the soul of Louis Vally.'"

Such was the last and dearest wish of the son of Lavaudieu, whose soul knew no aim but the will of his Liege, and whose heart knew no love save the love of his people.

SELAH.

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